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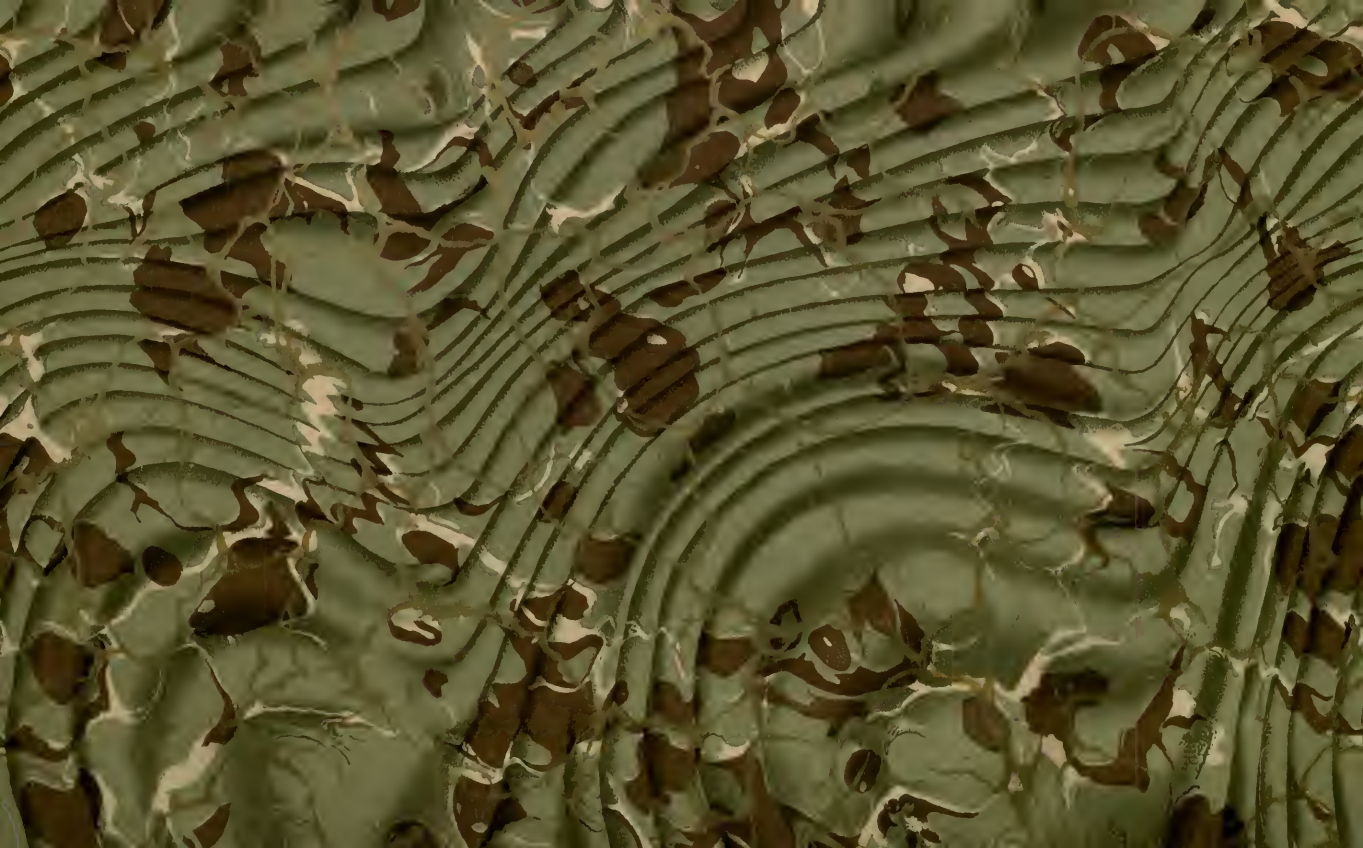
I am a heritage because I bring you years of thought and the lore of time — I impart yet I can not speak — I have traveled among the peoples of the earth — I am a rover — Oft-times I stray from the fireside of the one who loves and cherishes me - who misses me when I am gone — Should you find me vagrant please send me home - among my brothers - on the book shelves of .....

ALFRED SANTELL



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"O, MY LORD; YOU ARE PALE AND BLOODY"

SEMIRAMIS

SEMIRAMIS, ACT V

VOLUME XVII

LONDON, 1901
THE WERNER COMPANY
1901

EDITION DE LA PACIFICATION

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VOLUME XVII

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THE DRAMATIC WORKS

OF

VOLTAIRE

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOL. III

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ALZIRE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DON GUZMAN, Governor of Peru.

DON ALVAREZ, { Father of Guzman, and late Governor.

ZAMOR, Sovereign of a Part of Potosi.

MONTEZUMA, Sovereign of another Part.

ALZIRE, Daughter of Montezuma.

EMIRA, CEPHALE. { Attendants on Alzire.

SPANISH Officers.

AMERICANS.

SCENE, LIMA.

In his preface to this play Voltaire says; "This tragedy, the fable of which is invented, and almost of a new species, was written with a view of showing how far superior the spirit of true religion is to the light of nature. The religion of a barbarian consists in offering up to his gods the blood of his enemies; a Christian badly instructed has seldom much more humanity: to be a strict observer of some unnecessary rites and ceremonies, and at the same time deficient in the most essential duties, to say certain prayers at particular times, and carefully to conceal his vices; this is his religion: that of a true Christian is to look upon all mankind as his brethren, to do them all the good in his power and pardon their offences: such is *Guzman* at the hour of death, and *Alvarez* during the whole course of his life; such a man was Henry IV., as I have described him, even with all his foibles: in every part of my writings I have endeavored to enforce that humanity which ought to be the distinguishing characteristic of a thinking being: the reader will always find in them (if I may venture to say so much of my own works) a desire to promote the happiness of all men, and an *abhorrence* of injustice and oppression: it is this, and this alone, which hath hitherto saved them from that obscurity to which their many inperfections would otherwise long since have condemned them."

ALZIRE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

ALVAREZ, GUZMAN.

ALVAREZ.

At length, for so the council hath decreed,
Guzman succeeds Alvarez; long, my son,
Mayest thou preserve for heaven and for thy king
This better half of our new conquered world,
This fertile source of riches and of crimes!
Joyful to thee I yield the post of honor,
That suits but ill with feeble age like mine;
In youth thy father trod the paths of glory;
Alvarez first our winged castles bore
To Mexico's astonished sons; he led
Spain's gallant heroes to this golden shore:
After a life spent in my country's service,
Could I have formed these heroes into men,
Could I have made them virtuous, mild, and good,
I had been amply paid for all my toils:
But who shall stop the haughty conqueror?
Alas! my son, their cruelties obscure
The lustre of their fame; I weep the fate
Of these unhappy victors, raised by heaven
To greatness but to be supremely wicked.
O Guzman, I am verging to the grave,
Let me but live to see thee govern here
As justice shall direct thee, and I die
With pleasure.

GUZMAN.

By thy great example fired,
With thee I fought and conquered for my country;
From thee must learn to rule: it is not mine
To give the wise and good Alvarez laws,
But to receive them from him.

ALVAREZ.

No; my son,
The sovereign power can never be divided:
Worn down with years and labor, I resign
All worldly pomp; it is enough for me
If yet my feeble voice be sometimes heard
To counsel and direct thee; trust me, Guzman,
Men are not creatures one would wish to rule:
To that almighty being, whom too long
I have neglected, would I consecrate
My poor remains of life; one boon alone,
As friend, I ask of thee, as father claim;
To give me up those slaves who by your order
Are here confined; this day, my son, should be
A day of pardon, marked by clemency,
And not by justice.

GUZMAN.

A request from you
Is a command; but think, my lord, I beg,
What dangers may ensue: a savage people,
But half subdued, and to the yoke of slavery
Bending reluctant, ready for revolt,
Should never be familiar with their conquerors,
Or dare to look on those they should be taught
To tremble at: unarmed with power and vengeance
They would despise us: these untutored Indians,
Fiery and bold, ill brook the galling rein

Of servitude, by chastisement alone
Made tame, and humble, pardoned once, they think
You fear them; power, in short, is lost by mildness;
Severity alone insures obedience.
The brave Castilian serves in honor's cause,
With cheerful resignation, 'tis his pride,
His glory; but inferior nations court
Oppression; force and only force constrains them:
Did not the gods of these barbarians drink
The blood of men, they would not be adored.

ALVAREZ.

And can a Christian, as thou art, approve
These tyrant maxims, the detested offspring
Of narrow policy? are these the means
To win the wild barbarian to our faith?
Thinkest thou to rule them with an iron hand,
And serve a God of peace with war and slaughter?
Braved I for this the burning tropic's rage,
And all the terrors of a world unknown,
To see our country cursed, our faith disgraced?
God sent us here for other purposes,
Sent us to make his holy name revered,
His sacred laws beloved: whilst we, my son,
Unmindful of that faith which we profess,
The laws we teach, and all the tender ties
Of soft humanity, insatiate still
For blood and gold, instead of winning o'er
These savages by gentle means, destroy them.
All is confusion, death, and horror round us,
And nought have we of heaven but its thunder;
Our name indeed bears terror with it; Spain
Is feared, but hated too: we are the scourge
Of this new world, vain, covetous, unjust;
In short, I blush to own it, we alone

Are the barbarians here: the simple savage,
Though fierce by nature, is in courage equal,
In goodness our superior. O my Guzman,
Had he, like us, been prodigal of blood,
Had he not felt the throbs of tender pity,
Alvarez had not lived to speak his virtues:
Hast thou forgot that day, when by a crowd
Of desperate natives I was circled in
On every side, and all my faithful band
Of followers cut off; alone I stood,
And every moment looked for death, when, lo;
At mention of my name, they dropped their arms;
And straight a young American approached me,
Embraced my knees, and bathed them with his tears;
And "is it you," he cried, "is it my friend?
Live, good Alvarez, virtue pure as thine
May be most useful to us; be a father
To the unhappy; let thy tyrant nation,
That would enslave us, learn from hence—to pardon,
And own a savage capable of virtue."
I see you are moved; O hearken to the voice
Of mild humanity, by me she speaks,
By me addresses Guzman; O my son,
Canst thou expect the object of thy wishes,
The fair Alzire ever will crown thy hopes,
If thou art cruel? thinkest thou to cement
The dearest bonds of nature in the blood
Of her loved countrymen, or shall their groans
Be heard, and Guzman soften into mercy?

GUZMAN.

'Tis your command, my lord, and I submit;
They have their freedom, but on this condition,

For so our laws require, they must be Christians:
To quit their idols, and embrace our faith,
Alone can save them; we must bend by force
Their stubborn hearts, and drag them to the altar;
One king must be obeyed, one God adored.

ALVAREZ.

Hear me, my son, I wish, as much as Guzman,
That truth may fix her sacred empire here,
That neither heaven nor Spain henceforth may find
A foe on earth; but know, the heart oppressed
Is never conquered: I force none, yet I
Have conquered many; the true God, my son,
The God of Christians is a God of mercy.

GUZMAN.

You've conquered, sir, the father over his son
Is absolute; and you, my lord, would soften
The hardest heart, whilst virtue by Alvarez
In mildest accents pleads her powerful cause:
O since kind heaven to thee hath lent the art
Of soft persuasion, use it for thy son,
On thee alone depends the happiness
Of Guzman's life: the proud Alzire scorns
My proffered hand: I love her but too well,
Heaven knows how dearly! but I cannot stoop
Meanly to sooth a haughty woman's pride,
I cannot make myself a poor tame slave
To her imperious will; but thou hast power
O'er the fair tyrant's father; talk to him
For the last time; let him command his daughter
To take my hand, and make your Guzman happy;
And yet it hurts my soul to think Alvarez
Should stoop so low, and be a suppliant for me.

ALVAREZ.

Already I have spoke, and Montezuma
Hath seen his daughter; she will soon be thine.
I've been a friend to his unhappy race,
And soothed the sorrows of captivity:
Already he hath quitted his false gods;
Alzire too, a convert to our faith,
To this new world shines forth a bright example.
She only can unite the jarring nations,
And make us happy; thy long wished-for nuptials
Shall join two distant globes; these fierce barbarians,
Who now detest our laws, when they shall see
The daughter of their king in Guzman's arms,
Cheerful beneath thy easy yoke shall bend
Their willing hearts, and soon be all our own:
But Montezuma comes; away, my son,
Expect me with Alzire at the altar.

SCENE II.

ALVAREZ, MONTEZUMA.

ALVAREZ.

At length, obedient to a father's will,
Alzire yields, I hope, to thy persuasion.

MONTEZUMA.

If yet my daughter trembles at the thought
Of wedding him who has destroyed her race,
Alvarez will forgive a woman's weakness;
For thou hast been a father to the wretched:
Thy gentle manners teach us to revere
That holy faith from whence they sprung; by thee
The will of heaven to this new world revealed,

Enlightened our dark minds; what mighty Spain
Unconquered left, thy virtue has subdued:
Thy cruel countrymen's remorseless rage
Had rendered even thy God detestable,
But that in thee His great perfections shine,
His goodness, and His mercy; in thy heart
We trace his image; Montezuma's thine,
His daughter, and his house; the good Alvarez
Shall have them all: Potosi and Peru,
With my Alzire, shall descend to Guzman:
Prepare the nuptial rites, adorn your temple,
And let your son be ready to receive her:
Methinks it is as if the immortal beings
Had deigned to visit earth, and mix with men.

ALVAREZ.

O Montezuma, let me live to see
This blest event, and I shall die content.
O God, whose gracious hand conducted us
To this new world, enlighten and preserve it;
Propitious smile on these first holy vows
Made at thy altar here! adieu, my friend,
To thee I owe my Guzman's happiness.

SCENE III.

MONTEZUMA.

[*Alone.*

O thou true God, whose powerful arm destroyed
Those idle deities I once adored,
Watch o'er the poor remains of my sad life,
And sooth my sorrows; I have lost my all,
All but Alzire, O protect her youth,
Watch o'er her steps, and guide her tender heart!

SCENE IV.

MONTEZUMA, ALZIRE.

MONTEZUMA.

Daughter, the hour is come to make thyself
And the world happy, to command the conqueror,
And make the vanquished smile, restore thy country
To her lost honor, and to regal power
Rise from the bosom of adversity.
Alzire will obey, I know she will;
Dry up thy tears, a father must not see them.

ALZIRE.

I have no will but yours; yet, O my lord,
See my despair, and look into my soul.

MONTEZUMA.

No more of that; thy word is passed, Alzire,
And I depend on it.

ALZIRE.

'Twas extorted from me;
The cruel sacrifice: is this a time
To plight my faith, and think of nuptial joy,
This hapless day, when all I held most dear
Was ravished from me, when our wide-stretched empire
And all her hosts, the children of the sun,
Inglorious fell beneath the cruel Guzman?
O 'twas a day marked by the hand of heaven
As most unfortunate.

MONTEZUMA.

Our days, Alzire,
Are happy or unhappy from ourselves,

And not from circumstance or accident,
As superstition taught our ancestors
To credit; think no more on it.

ALZIRE.

On this day
My Zamor fell, our country's great avenger,
My lover, chosen by thee, by thee, my father,
To be Alzire's husband.

MONTEZUMA.

I have paid
The debt of sorrow due to Zamor's ashes,
And hold his memory dear; but death has cancelled
Your mutual bonds; therefore no longer shed
Those fruitless tears, but carry to the altar
A free and cheerful heart; thy God commands,
He calls thee to him; if thou art a Christian,
Now hear his voice.

ALZIRE.

Alas! my lord, I know
A father's power, and know my duty to him,
'Tis to obey, to fall a sacrifice
Before him; I have passed the utmost bounds
Which nature ever prescribed; thy will alone
Hath been my law, nor did I ever stain
With disobedience my true faith, for thee
I left my country's gods, and am a Christian:
Alas! my father, why wouldst thou deceive me,
Why tell me, the new deity I serve
Would bring me peace, that his all-healing power
Would ease my tortured heart? delusive promise!
For O my lord, the deadly poison still
Lurks in my veins, still Zamor's image dwells
In his Alzire's heart, nor time nor death

Can e'er efface it: well I know Alvarez
Condemns that passion which he once approved:
But I will make him ample recompense
By my obedience:—wed me to the tyrant,
Give me to Guzman, 'tis a sacrifice
I owe my country; but remember, sir,
How dreadful 'tis, and tremble at the thought
Of such unnatural, such detested bonds,
Thou who condemnest me to these fatal nuptials,
Who bidst Alzire give her hand to Guzman,
And at the altar promise him a heart
Which is not hers to give.

MONTEZUMA.

What says my child?
O in the name of every tender tie
That binds thee to me, spare a wretched father!
Pity my age, and do not, by the woes
Which thou alone, Alzire, canst remove,
Let me entreat thee, O embitter not
The sad remainder of Alvarez's life!
Have I not ever strove to make thee happy,
And wilt thou not return it? O my daughter,
Let virtue guide thy steps in duty's path,
And lead thee on to bliss! thy country calls,
Wilt thou betray her? learn henceforth, Alzire,
To be the mistress of thyself.

ALZIRE.

And must I
Learn to dissemble then? ungrateful task!

SCENE V.

GUZMAN, ALZIRE.

GUZMAN.

These long delays, Alzire, are unkind,
And, let me add, ungenerous, to the man
Who lives but to oblige you: for thy sake
I stopped the hand of justice; all those captives,
Whose pardon you solicited, are free:
But I should blush to think that Guzman owed
Thy kind compliance to so poor a service;
'Tis on thyself, and thy consenting heart,
He founds his hopes, nor thought I ever till now
My happiness could make Alzire wretched.

ALZIRE.

Wretched indeed! O grant, kind heaven, this day
May not prove fatal to us both! you see
I am abashed, confounded, left a prey
To horror and despair: do not these eyes
Alone betray the anguish of a mind
Oppressed with grief? canst thou not read it there?
I know thou canst: such is my nature, Guzman;
Ne'er did Alzire's face belie her heart:
Dissimulation and disguise, my lord,
Are European arts, which I abhor.

GUZMAN.

I love thy frankness, but lament the cause;
Zamor is still beloved, his memory lives
Within thy breast, my rival even in death:
This is too much, Alzire; duty, honor,
Virtue forbid it: weep no more, it wounds
My heart, and I am jealous of thy tears.

ALZIRE.

Jealous of him, my lord, who in the grave
Is mouldering now, my loved, lamented Zamor?
For I confess I loved him, we were bound
By mutual vows, and still I weep his fate:
If thou art a friend to constancy and truth,
Thou wilt not blame my passion, but approve it.
By this, and this alone, may Guzman gain
Alzire's heart.

SCENE VI.

GUZMAN.

[*Alone.*

Her pride astonishes,
And yet I know not how her freedom charms me:
There is a savage beauty in her heart
That suits the wildness of her native clime;
But softer manners may subdue her mind,
And bind her stubborn fierceness to the yoke
Of duty; Guzman now is lord of all,
And nought remains unconquered but Alzire:
Resolved by force or art to make her mine,
Our hands, if not our hearts, shall be united.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

ZAMOR, AMERICANS.

ZAMOR.

My noble friends, and fellow-sufferers,
Whom dangers strengthen, and misfortunes make

But more illustrious, shall we ne'er obtain
Our sweet revenge, or honorable death?
Still must we live unable or to serve
Alzire, or our country; shall we never
Find out the hated Guzman, and destroy
That fell destroyer? O my country's gods,
Powerless and vain, ye gave up this fair land
Of liberty to hostile deities;
And tamely suffered a few wandering Spaniards
To spoil your altars, lay your temples waste,
And desolate our empire; I have lost
A kingdom and Alzire; all is gone
But shame, and sorrow, and resentment, those
I carried with me to the burning sands
And gloomy deserts; there I cherished long
The secret hopes of vengeance: you, my friends
Revived your drooping Zamor, and inspired
His soul with flattering thoughts of better days:
Deep in the forest's shade we left a band
Of chosen spirits, resolute and bold,
And hither came, impatient to observe
The walls upraised by our tremendous foe.
They watched, and seized us: in a dungeon long
Confined, at length our tyrant masters grant us
Leave to walk forth, and breathe the wholesome air,
Yet will not deign to let us know our fate:
Can none inform me where we are, who dwells
Within this seat of sorrow? where's Alzire,
Where's Montezuma, lives he, is he free,
Or a vile slave like Zamor? say, my friends,
And partners in affliction, know ye not?

AN AMERICAN.

Like you, my lord, in chains, and hither led
By secret paths, we're ignorant of all:

Great Cacique, worthy of a better fate,
If 'tis decreed that thou must fall, at least
Thou shalt find friends prepared to perish with thee,
And own them not unworthy of their master.

ZAMOR.

After a glorious victory, my friends,
A glorious death is most to be desired;
But O, to die in vile obscurity,
To perish thus in ignominious bondage,
To leave our bleeding country thus enslaved
By European robbers, those assassins
Whose thirst for blood and gold, these proud usurpers,
Who would extort by every cruel art
Of punishment those riches which we hold
More cheap, more worthless than themselves, to leave
My loved Alzire, Zamor's dearer half,
To their licentious fury, O my friends,
'Tis worse than death: I tremble at the thought.

SCENE II.

ALVAREZ, ZAMOR, AMERICANS.

ALVAREZ.

Live, and be free.

ZAMOR.

Good heavens, what do I hear?
O unexpected sound! what God art thou
In human shape? a Spaniard, and forgive!
It cannot be: art thou the ruler here?

ALVAREZ.

No, captive; I am only the protector
Of innocence oppressed.

ZAMOR.

Thou good old man,
What is thy office here?

ALVAREZ.

To aid the wretched.

ZAMOR.

What could inspire thee with a thought so noble?

ALVAREZ.

My gratitude, religion, and my God.

ZAMOR.

God and religion! what! these cruel tyrants,
These ruffians, that still bathed in human blood
Depopulate earth, and change the smiling face
Of nature to a dreary desert, they
Who worship avarice alone! their God
Cannot be thine!

ALVAREZ.

It is the same, my son,
But they offend him, they disgrace his name,
And are indeed more guilty; they abuse
Their new-got power: thou knowest their crime, but know
My duty too: twice hath the travelling sun
Enlightened in his course our world and yours
Since a brave Indian, who he was I know not,
Stepped from amidst his fellow-savages,
And saved me from their fury; from that moment
I felt your sorrows, pitied your misfortunes,
And held you as my brethren and my friends;

Could I but meet my kind deliverer,
That gallant stranger, I should die in peace.

ZAMOR.

His age, his features, his transcendent virtue,
All, all conspire to say it is Alvarez:
Behold, and mark us well, canst thou distinguish
The hand that saved thee?

ALVAREZ.

Gracious heaven! come near.
O Providence! it is, it must be he,
The wished-for object of my gratitude;
He whom these eyes, grown dim with age, have sought
So long in vain; my son, my benefactor,
What shall I do to serve thee? thou shalt live
With old Alvarez; he shall be thy father,
Thy guardian and protector here: kind heaven
In gracious pity hath prolonged my days,
That I might pay the debt I owe to thee.

ZAMOR.

O if thy barbarous nation had possessed
But half the virtues that adorn Alvarez,
Our willing world had bowed submissive down
Before them; but their souls are not like thine,
For they delight in blood, whilst nature's self
Abhorring shudders at their cruelty;
Death were more welcome far than life with them:
Urge me not therefore, good Alvarez, all
I wish to know is this, have they destroyed
My noble friend, the wretched Montezuma?
Where's my Alzire's father? O my lord,
Forgive these tears, the memory of past griefs
Sits heavy on me.

ALVAREZ.

Let them flow my son,
'Tis the best mark of our humanity:
The heart that feels not for another's woe
Is fit for every crime: thy friend survives,
And full of years and honors lives with us
In happiness and peace.

ZAMOR.

Might I behold him?

ALVAREZ.

Yes; thou shalt see him soon: may his persuasion
Induce thee to think better of us all,
And follow his example!

ZAMOR.

Can he live
With Christians, Montezuma live with Christians?

ALVAREZ.

Have patience, son, and he shall tell thee all,
Touching our union, and the sacred bonds
That soon shall bind in cords of amity
Our world to thine—but I must to my son,
And let him know my happiness; I leave thee
But for a moment; fare thee well.

SCENE III.

ZAMOR, AMERICANS.

ZAMOR.

At last
Heaven seems to smile on Zamor; I have found
Amongst these vile barbarians one just man,

Honest and true: Alvarez is a god,
Sent down from heaven to soften this rude world,
And bless mankind: he said he had a son,
That son shall be my brother and my friend,
If he is worthy of his noble father:
O glorious hope! shall I again behold
Great Montezuma after three long years?
Alzire too, my dear, my loved Alzire,
Shall I embrace thee, hast thou kept thy faith,
That first of virtues, to reward thy Zamor?
The heart oppressed is ever diffident:
Another old man comes this way: my soul
It still perplexed.

SCENE IV.

MONTEZUMA, ZAMOR, AMERICANS.

ZAMOR.

O noble Montezuma,
Do I once more embrace thee? see thy Zamor
Snatched from the jaws of death; he lives to save
And to defend his prince: behold thy friend,
Thy soldier, and thy son: O where's Alzire?
Be quick, and tell me, let me know her fate,
My life depends on that.

MONTEZUMA.

Unhappy Cacique,
With grief sincere we have lamented thee;
Thy fellow-soldiers to thy memory raised
The decent tomb, and every honor paid
Due to thy virtues: but thank heaven! thou livest,
Henceforth may happier days await thee, Zamor!
But say, why camest thou hither?

ZAMOR.

To avenge
My gods, myself, my father and Alzire.

MONTEZUMA.

What sayst thou?

ZAMOR.

Call to mind that dreadful day
When the fierce Spaniard, terrible in arms,
Rushed through our powerless hosts, o'erthrew our bulwarks,
And laid our empire waste; his name was Guzman:
That name, thou well rememberest, was the signal
Given for destruction; at that name they snatched
The sweet Alzire, thy loved daughter, from me,
And bore her to captivity with thee
And all thy race; destroyed the holy altar,
Where I had hoped to make Alzire mine,
Then dragged me to the tyrant: shall I tell thee
What cruel torments that insatiate monster
Inflicted on me, to extort confession
Of hidden gold, the Christian's deity,
Which we despise and trample on? half-dead
They left me and retired: time, Montezuma,
Can never bury injuries like mine;
Thou seest me here, prepared for great revenge:
Some chosen friends, attached to Zamor's cause,
By equal wrongs provoked, with equal hate
Inspired, await me in the neighboring forest,
Resolved with me to conquer or to die.

MONTEZUMA.

O Zamor, whither would thy headlong passion
Transport thee? wherefore wouldst thou thus pursue
That death which seems so willing to avoid thee?

What can thy friends do for thee? their weak arms,
Their fish-bone spears, their sabres made of stone,
Their soldiers naked, and ill-disciplined,
Against these giants armed with mortal steel,
And launching their dread thunder bolts against thee?
Swift as the winds, their fiery coursers bear them
To certain victory; the world is theirs,
And we, my Zamor, must submit.

ZAMOR.

Whilst life
Shall animate these veins, I never will:
No, Montezuma: their destructive thunder,
Their coats of steel, their fiery coursers taught
Like them to fight, and share their master's glory,
This might affright, and terrify a while
Our gaping savages, but I behold
This pompous scene unruffled: to subdue
Our haughty foe one thing alone's required,
And that is, not to fear them; novelty,
That conquers cowards, only has enslaved us:
Gold, that pernicious native of our soil,
Draws Europe hither, but defends us not
Against her; niggard nature has denied us
A nobler metal, her all-conquering steel,
And given it to barbarians; but kind heaven,
In lieu of this indulgence, hath bestowed
Virtues on us which Europe never knew.
I come to fight and conquer for Alzire.

MONTEZUMA.

Urge it no more, my Zamor, heaven declares
Against us, calm thy rage; the times are changed.

ZAMOR.

Changed, didst thou say, my lord? it cannot be,

If Montezuma's heart is still the same,
If my Alzire's faithful, if I live
Still in her memory.—Thou turnest aside
And weepest.

MONTEZUMA.

Unhappy Zamor!

ZAMOR.

Am I not
Thy son? our tyrants have not altered thee?
They cannot, sure they cannot have corrupted
An old man's heart, and made it false as theirs?

MONTEZUMA.

I am not guilty, Zamor, nor are all
These conquerors tyrants; some were sent by heaven
To guide our footsteps in the paths of truth,
To teach us arts unknown, immortal secrets,
The knowledge of mankind, the arts, my son,
To speak, to think, to live, and to be happy.

ZAMOR.

O horrid! canst thou praise these ruffians, whilst
Thy daughter, thy Alzire, is their slave?

MONTEZUMA.

Zamor, Alzire's free.

ZAMOR.

Ha! Montezuma,
Alzire free? forgive me, but remember,
She's mine, my lord, by every solemn tie;
You promised me, before the gods you promised,
To give her to me; they received our vows;
She is not perjured?

MONTEZUMA.

Call not on those gods,
For they are vain, and fancied idols all;
I have abjured them, and henceforth must worship
That power supreme which hath subdued them.

ZAMOR.

Ha!
The law of thy forefathers, thy religion,
Is that deserted?

MONTEZUMA.

I have found its weakness,
And left its vain chimeras: may the God
Of Gods convert thee, and inspire with truth
Thy unenlightened soul! unhappy Zamor,
Soon mayest thou know that Europe thou condemnest,
Her virtues, and her faith!

ZAMOR.

What mighty virtues
Has she to boast? thou art indeed a slave
If thou hast lost thy gods, thy faith, thy honor,
And broke thy sacred word: Alzire too,
Has she betrayed me? O take heed!

MONTEZUMA.

My heart
Reproaches me for nothing: fare thee well!
I bless my own good fate, and weep for thine.

ZAMOR.

If thou art false, thou hast cause to weep indeed:
Pity the torments which I feel for thee,
And for thy guilt; pity a heart distracted
By love and vengeance; let me find out Guzman

Let me behold Alzire, let me fall
Beneath her feet; O do not hide her from me:
Conduct me, urge me not thus to despair,
Put on a human heart, let thy lost virtue——

SCENE V.

MONTEZUMA, ZAMOR, *Guards.*

GUARD.

[*To Montezuma.*

The ceremony waits, my lord.

MONTEZUMA.

I come.

ZAMOR.

Thou wilt not leave me? tell me, Montezuma,
What ceremony's this.

MONTEZUMA.

No more: away,
And leave this fatal place.

ZAMOR.

Though heaven itself
Forbade me, I would follow thee.

MONTEZUMA.

Forgive
My rude denial, Zamor, but you must not,
I say you must not—guards, prevent him—pagans
Must not profane our Christian altars; I
Command not here, but Guzman speaks by me:
You must obey: farewell.

SCENE VI.

ZAMOR, AMERICANS.

ZAMOR.

What do I hear?
Guzman? O shameful treason! Montezuma
The slave of Guzman! where is virtue fled?
Alzire too, is my Alzire guilty?
Has she too drank corruption's poisonous bowl
From these vile Christians?—that destroyer Guzman
Rules here, it seems; what's to be done?

FIRST AMERICAN.

Permit me
To counsel you, my lord; the good old man
Who saved thee with his son will soon return,
He can deny you nothing; ask of him
Safe conduct to the city gates; that done,
We may return and join our noble friends
Against the foe: I doubt not of success:
We will not spare a man of them except
Alvarez, and his son: I've marked, my lord,
With most observant eye, their fosses, ramparts,
And brazen thunders, European arts
That fright not me: alas! our countrymen
Forge their own shameful chains, and tamely bend
Beneath these sons of pride; but soon, my lord,
When they shall see their great avenger here,
Then will they rise indignant, and destroy
This ignominious work of slavery:
Yes; on the bleeding bodies of our foes
We'll make a path to glory; on the heads

Of these vile Christians turn the fiery tempest,
And with their own destructive instruments
Of murder shake this all-usurping power,
Founded by pride on ignorance and fear.

ZAMOR.

O how I joy, ye great unfortunate,
To find your kindred breasts thus nobly beat
With sympathetic fury! let us punish .
The haughty Guzman, let his blood atone
For our lost country's: O thou deity
Of injured mortals, sweet revenge, O come,
Assist thy servants, let but Guzman perish
And we are satisfied! but O my friends,
We talk of vengeance, yet are captives still,
Still groan beneath the yoke of shameful bondage:
Deserted by Alvarez, and betrayed
By Montezuma, all I love perhaps
Is in the power of him whom most I hate,
The only comfort left me is—to doubt.
But hark! what noise is that? the torches flame
On every side, and yield a double day:
This barbarous people's brazen thunder speaks
Some horrid rites, or pompous sacrifice
Preparing; look around, and see if Zamor
Shall save his much-loved friends, or perish with them.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

ALZIRE.

[*Alone.*

Ye manes of my dear departed Zamor,

Forgive me, O forgive the wife of Guzman!
The holy altar hath received our vows,
And they are sealed in heaven: pursue me not,
Indignant shade! O if Alzire's tears,
Her bitter anguish, her remorse, the pangs
Of her reluctant soul, can reach the dead,
If in a happier world thou still retainest
Thy generous noble spirit, thou wilt pardon
My weakness; 'twas a father's cruel will,
A people's happiness required it of me;
Could I refuse the dreadful sacrifice?
Thou art at peace, my Zamor, do not thus
Distract my soul, but leave me to my fate;
Alas! already it has cost me dear.

SCENE II.

ALZIRE, EMIRA.

ALZIRE.

And shall I not behold my countrymen,
The loved companions of my infant years,
Those wretched captives, may I not enjoy
The mournful privilege to mix with theirs
My friendly tears, and mourn their cruel fate?

EMIRA.

O madam, we have cause indeed to weep,
To dread the wrath of Guzman, to lament
And tremble for our country; for the hour
Of slaughter and destruction is at hand:
Again I saw the bloody flag displayed,
The proud tribunal's met, and Montezuma
Is summoned to appear: all dreadful omens!
What will become of us?

ALZIRE.

Unpitying heaven!
I've been deceived, betrayed:—cruel O Guzman!
Was it for this I gave him at the altar
My long reluctant hand? that fatal bond
I shall repent of to my latest hour:
O under what malignant star, my father,
Madest thou these cruel, these detested nuptials?

SCENE III.

ALZIRE, EMIRA, CEPHANES.

CEPHANES.

One of those slaves, whom this propitious day
Restored to freedom, begs admittance to you
In secret.

ALZIRE.

Let him enter; 'twill rejoice
My heart to see him; he and all his friends
Are welcome to Alzire: but why comes he
Alone?

CEPHANES.

Some secret labors in his breast,
Which you and only you, he says, must know.
'Twas he, it seems, whose heaven-directed arm
Saved the good father of thy valiant lord,
The noble Guzman.

EMIRA.

He has sought you long;
But Montezuma's private orders were,
He should not see you: melancholy sits

On his dark brow, as if he were intent
On some great purpose.

CEPHANES.

Grief and anguish seem
To rack his soul: at mention of your name
He sighed, and wept, as if yet ignorant
Of your new honors and the rank you bear.

ALZIRE.

Unworthy rank, and honors I despise!
Perhaps the hero knows my wretched race,
And is no stranger to Alzire's woes:
Perhaps he knew my Zamor; who can tell
But he might be a witness of his death,
And comes to tell the melancholy tale?
A dreadful duty! that would but renew
A lover's pangs, and double my distress;
But let him come: I know not why my heart
Should flutter thus; this hateful palace ever
Hath been a scene of sad disquietude
And trouble to me: bid him enter.

SCENE IV.

ALZIRE, ZAMOR, EMIRA.

ZAMOR.

Yes;
It is Alzire: is she then restored?

ALZIRE.

Such were his features, voice, and motion: heaven!
It cannot be: O Zamor!—O support me.
[*She faints.*

ZAMOR.

'Tis he.

ALZIRE.

Ha! Zamor at Alzire's feet?
'Tis all delusion.

ZAMOR.

No; I live for thee,
And at thy feet reclaim thy plighted faith;
O my Alzire, idol of my soul,
Wilt thou not hear me? where are all thy vows,
The sacred ties that bound us fast together?
Thou hast not broke them?

ALZIRE.

Thou dear fatal object
Of grief and joy, of rapture and despair,
In what a dreadful moment hast thou chose
To meet Alzire? every word thou utterest
But plunges a new dagger in my heart.

ZAMOR.

Thou weepest, yet lookest on Zamor!

ALZIRE.

'Tis too late:

ZAMOR.

I know you thought me dead: e'er since that hour
Of terror, when those European tyrants
Deprived me of my gods, my throne and thee,
I've been a poor unhappy wanderer.
Knowest thou, my love, that savage murderer, Guzman,
With ignominious stripes, and cruel torture,
Insulted me? the husband of thy choice,
Thy once loved happy Zamor, fell a prey

To ruffians:—how it wounds thy tender heart!
Thou burnest with fierce resentment of my wrongs,
And thou wilt join with Zamor to avenge them:
Some guardian god, propitious to our loves,
Saved me from death, that we might meet again
In happiness: I hope Alzire's true:
Thou hast not left thy gods, betrayed thy country,
Thou art not grown a false perfidious Spaniard?
They tell me I shall meet with Guzman here,
I come to free thee from that proud barbarian:
Thou lovest me, my Alzire, and wilt give
The victim to my wrath.

ALZIRE.

Thou hast been wronged;
Revenge thyself and see thy victim—here.

ZAMOR.

What sayest thou?—ha! thy faith, thy vows—

ALZIRE.

No more,
But strike—I merit not life or thee.

ZAMOR.

O cruel Montezuma! what thou toldest me
Was but too true.

ALZIRE.

And could he tell thee all;
Named he the wretch for whom I quitted Zamor?

ZAMOR.

He did not, durst not name him; that remains
For thee: O speak it: I shall be surprised
At nothing.

ALZIRE.

Hear then all my guilt.

ZAMOR.

Alzire!

ALZIRE.

That Guzman——

ZAMOR.

Gracious heaven!

ALZIRE.

Thy murderer,
Within this hour received my guilty hand;
He is—my husband.

ZAMOR.

Guzman!

ALZIRE.

Montezuma,
Alvarez—they betrayed my easy youth,
And urged me to the deed: the lost Alzire
Did at the Christian altar give up all
That she held dear on earth, her gods, her country,
Her—Zamor: O by those dear injured names
I beg thee, take this hated life.

ZAMOR.

Alzire,
Can it be true? is Guzman then thy husband?

ALZIRE.

To plead a father's undisputed right,
To say how long I struggled with my duty,
To number o'er the fruitless tears I shed
For three long years lamenting Zamor's death,
That still I loved thee, that I left in wrath
Those powerless gods that had deserted thee,
And from despair alone became a Christian,
Perhaps might mitigate Alzire's crime;

But I disdain it, I acknowledge all,
Confess my guilt, and sue for punishment.
Who shall absolve the wretch whom love condemns?
Take then a life that is not worth my care
Without thee; dost thou not abhor me, Zamor?

ZAMOR.

No: if thou lovest me still, thou are not guilty:
May I yet hope that Zamor has a place
In his Alzire's heart?

ALZIRE.

When old Alvarez
And Montezuma led me to the altar
I thought on Zamor, thought him then no more,
But reverenced, but adored his memory:
Our tyrants, our usurpers know I loved thee;
I told them all, told heaven and earth, nay told
My husband—and O take this last farewell,
I love thee still.

ZAMOR.

Is this then our last hour
Of happiness, and must we part so soon,
So lately met? O if the voice of love——

ALZIRE.

'Tis Guzman and his father.

SCENE V.

ALVAREZ, GUZMAN, ZAMOR, ALZIRE, *Attendants.*

ALVAREZ.

[*To Guzman.*

Son, behold
With thy Alzire stands my great preserver,

My benefactor, my deliverer.

[*To Zamor.*

O noble youth, to thee I owe my life,
Let me embrace thee, be my second son,
And share the pleasures of this happy day
With Guzman and Alvarez.

ZAMOR.

He thy son;
Guzman then thy son, that proud barbarian?

ALZIRE.

Avert the terrors of this dreadful moment,
Indulgent heaven!

ALVAREZ.

In what astonishment——

ZAMOR.

How could a father, brave and good, like thee
Be cursed with such a son?

GUZMAN.

Insulting slave,
Who gave thee license thus to spurn thy master?
Thou knowest not who I am.

ZAMOR.

I know thee well;
And thou among the wretches thou hast made
Perhaps mayest one day meet the injured Zamor.

GUZMAN.

And art thou he?

ALVAREZ.

Ha! Zamor!

ZAMOR.

'Tis the same,
'Tis Zamor, whom thy cruel hand oppressed
With ignominious tortures, he whose eye
Thou darest not meet; thou tyrant ravisher,
Comest thou at last to rob me of my best
And dearest treasure? with thy ruthless sword
Make sure thy vengeance, and prevent the fate
Which thou deservest, ere Zamor, who preserved
The father, shall chastise the guilty son.

ALVAREZ.

[*To Guzman.*

What sayest thou, Guzman, canst thou answer this?

GUZMAN.

It were beneath me; punishment alone
Should answer insolence, and, but for thee,
Ere this he should have met with it.

[*Turning to Alzire.*

You, madam,
For your own honor might have more regard,
If not for mine, than thus to parley with
A traitor: come, no more of this, Alzire,
Thy tears offend me: husbands may be jealous;
Remember that and tremble.

ALZIRE.

[*To Guzman.*

Cruel Guzman!
My kind protector,

[*Turning to Alvarez.*

Good Alvarez, hear me:
And thou,

[*To Zamor.*

In better days my dearest hope,
O look with pity on the lost Alzire!
[*Pointing to Zamor.*
Behold the husband whom my father chose;
Long ere this hapless country bowed the neck
To European tyrants, Zamor fell,
So fame reported, and with him Peru,
Then first subdued: my wretched father, old
And full of sorrows, to the Christian's God,
Forsaken by his own, indignant fled;
The Christian altar saw Alzire's hand
Given to her lover's murderer: thy new faith,
Which yet I know not, may condemn Alzire,
But virtue will forgive me when I add,
That still I love thee, Zamor; but my oath,
My marriage vow, rash fatal marriage! says
I never must be thine—nor can I now
Be Guzman's—false to both, ye both have cause
To hate me: which of you will kindly end
My wretched being? Guzman's hand, already
Stained with the blood of my unhappy race,
Were fittest to revenge the injured rights
Of honor and of love; be just for once,
And strike the guilty.

GUZMAN.

Darest thou thus abuse
The goodness thou deservest not? but remember
'Twas thy request; thy punishment is ready:
My rival dies;—away with him.

ALVAREZ.

Inhuman!
O stop, my son, consider what is due
To him who saved thy father—ye are both

My children—let that tender name inspire
Your breasts with pity for an aged father:
At least—

SCENE VI.

ALVAREZ, GUZMAN, ALZIRE, ZAMOR.
DON ALONZO, *a Spanish officer.*

ALONZO.

My lord, the foe is at our gates;
On every side their brazen bucklers ring
With barbarous dissonance: aloud they cry,
Revenge, and Zamor, whilst with measured steps,
Solemn and slow, the close-wedged phalanx moves,
As if these savages had learned from us
The arts by which we conquered them.

GUZMAN.

Away:
Let us be gone; my presence soon shall teach
These slaves their duty—heroes of Castile,
Ye sons of victory, this new world was made
To wear your chains, to fear, and to obey you.

ZAMOR.

To fear and to obey? 'tis false, proud Guzman;
Ye are but mortals like ourselves, no more.

GUZMAN.

Guards, drag him hence.

ZAMOR.

[*To the Spaniards surrounding him.*
Ye dare not: are ye gods,
And must we worship deities thus bathed
In our own blood?

GUZMAN.

Obey me, slaves.

ALZIRE.

My lord!

ALVAREZ.

Remember, son, that Zamor saved thy father.

GUZMAN.

My lord, I shall remember your instructions,
You taught me how to conquer, and I fly
Once more to victory: farewell!

SCENE VII.

ALVAREZ, ALZIRE.

ALZIRE.

[*Kneeling.*

My lord,
Behold me at your feet, accept the homage
Due to thy virtues! Guzman's injured honor
Calls for revenge, Alzire was to blame;
But I was bound to Zamor by the ties
Of sacred love, long ere I knew thy son;
We cannot give our hearts a second time:
Zamor had mine, and ever must preserve it:
O he is good and virtuous, for he saved
Thy life, Alvarez—O forgive me!

ALVAREZ.

Rise
Alzire, I forgive and pity thee;
Feel as a father and a friend thy sorrows,
Lament thy Zamor's fate, and will protect him:

But let the solemn vow thou madest to Guzman
Be graved within thy heart; thou are no longer
The mistress of thyself: remember well
Thou art my daughter—Guzman was most cruel,
I know he was, but still he is—thy husband:
Perhaps he may relent; heaven grant he may!

ALZIRE.

Alas! why art not thou my Zamor's father?

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

ALVAREZ, GUZMAN.

ALVAREZ.

Fortune, my son, has crowned thee with success,
Endeavor to deserve it; do not stain
The laurel wreath with blood, but let fair mercy,
That adds new lustre to the conqueror's glory,
Inspire thy breast with pity; be a man,
A Christian, and forgive: Alvarez asks thee
To pardon Zamor—shall a father plead
In vain? O Guzman, shall I never soften
Thy savage manners, never teach my son
To conquer hearts?

GUZMAN.

Alvarez has pierced mine
Most deeply; ask my life, and it is yours,
But leave my honor, leave me my revenge;
How can I pardon Zamor, when I know
Alzire loves him?

ALVAREZ.

Therefore he deserves
Thy pity more.

GUZMAN.

O to be pitied thus,
And thus beloved, Guzman would die with pleasure.

ALVAREZ.

With all that fierce resentment, feelest thou too
The pangs of jealousy?

GUZMAN.

And canst thou blame
An injured husband? I have too much cause
For jealousy, and yet thou pitiest not
The unhappy Guzman.

ALVAREZ.

Thou art wild, impetuous,
And bitter in thy wrath; Alzire's virtues
Deserve a milder treatment; when opposed,
Her open heart, rough as her native soil,
Resists with stubborn firmness, but would yield
To soft persuasion; gentle means, my son,
Are ever the most powerful.

GUZMAN.

Must I soothe
The pride of beauty, wear a brow serene,
And cover my resentment, to expose
My easy heart to new indignities?
I should have thought that, jealous of my honor
You would approve, and not condemn my rage:
Is it not shame enough that I am wedded
To a proud slave who hates me, braves my power,

And owns her heart is given to another?
Whom yet, to make me more accursed, I love.

ALVAREZ.

Why blush at that? it is a lawful passion,
Indulge, but keep it within proper bounds,
For all excess is guilty—only promise
You will determine nothing till I've seen her
Once more.

GUZMAN.

A father's will must be obeyed;
I will suspend my wrath, but urge me, sir,
No further.

ALVAREZ.

All I want is time: farewell.

[*Exit.*

GUZMAN.

[*Alone.*

And have I lived to envy Zamor's fate,
To envy a vile slave, who scarce deserves
The name of man!—What do I see? Alzire!

SCENE II.

GUZMAN, ALZIRE, EMIRA.

ALZIRE.

'Tis I, my lord, 'tis the afflicted wife
Of Guzman; she who honors, who reveres
And yet has injured thee: I come, my lord,
To throw me at your feet, to own my crime,
And beg forgiveness: nought have I disguised,
My open heart confessed its fatal passion
For the unhappy Zamor; if he dies,

He dies because Alzire was sincere;
But I shall more astonish thee, I come
To plead for him: I know that Guzman's proud,
Resentful, and severe, and yet I hope
He may be generous, 'tis a conqueror's pride,
His glory to forgive: an act like this
Would gain thee more than conquest can bestow,
Win every heart, perhaps even change Alzire's.
A fawning Spaniard might have promised more,
Have sighed, and wept, and softened thee with tears,
Which I disdain; the hand of nature formed
My plain untutored heart, if ought can move it,
'Tis generosity: let Guzman try
If it is made of penetrable mould.

GUZMAN.

If you're so fond of virtue, 'twould become you
To know and practise it, to study, madam,
Those manners you condemn, to learn your duty,
To treat yourself, your honor, and your fame
With more respect; nor dare to name a rival
Whom I abhor, but wait in humble silence
Till I determine what shall be his fate;
It is enough if I forgive Alzire:
This heart is not insensible; but know,
Those who believe shall always find me cruel.

SCENE III.

ALZIRE, EMIRA.

EMIRA.

He loves you still, and yet may be persuaded.

ALZIRE.

Ay, but he's jealous, that destroys my Zamor,
I lost his life by asking it; but say,
Emira, canst thou save him? shall he live,
Though far from his Alzire? didst thou try
That soldier?

EMIRA.

Yes; the grand corrupter, gold,
Has bought him to our interest; he is ready.

ALZIRE.

Thank heaven, that metal doth not always prove
The instrument of ill: but haste, Emira.

EMIRA.

Is Zamor then devoted to destruction?
Cannot Alvarez save him? have the council—

ALZIRE.

I have a thousand fears for him: alas!
These tyrants think the world was made for them,
That they were born the sovereigns of mankind,
That Zamor is a rebel and a slave:
Barbarians as they are—this cruel council—
But I'll prevent their murderous purposes:
That soldier, my Emira, how he lingers!

EMIRA.

Be not alarmed; night's friendly shade protects him,
And he will soon be here with Zamor; sleep
Hath closed the tyrant's eyes, and we are safe.

ALZIRE.

O let him lead me to the prison gate
That I may set him free.

EMIRA.

Behold, he comes:
But should ye be discovered, foul dishonor,
Disgrace, and infamy—

ALZIRE.

Attend on her
Who would betray the man she loves; this shame
Thou talkest of is a European phantom,
Which fools mistake for virtue! 'tis the love
Of glory not of justice, not the fear
Of vice but of reproach; a shame unknown
In these untutored climes, where honor shines
In its own native light, and scorns the aid
Of such false lustre; honor bids me save
A lover and a hero thus deserted.

SCENE IV.

ALZIRE, ZAMOR, EMIRA, *a soldier.*

ALZIRE.

O Zamor, all is lost, thy punishment
Already is prepared, and thou art doomed
To instant death; lose not a moment's time,
But haste away, this soldier will conduct thee:
Alas! thou seest my grief and my despair,
O save my husband from the guilt of murder,
Save thy dear self, and leave me to my fate.

ZAMOR.

Thou bidst me live, I must obey Alzire:
But wilt thou follow the poor friendless Zamor?

A desert and this heart are all I now
Have left to offer; once I had a throne.

ALZIRE.

What were a throne and empire without thee?
Alas! my Zamor, to the gloomy desert
My soul shall follow thee; but I am doomed
To wander here alone, to drag a life
Of bitterness and woe, to spend my hours
In sad reflections on my wretched state,
To be another's, and yet burn for thee:
I bid farewell to Zamor and to joy;
Away, and leave me to my duty; fain
Would I preserve my honor, and my love,
They both are sacred.

ZAMOR.

What's this idle honor,
This European phantom, that deludes thee;
This Christian altar, those detested oaths
Extorted from thee, this triumphant God;
What have they done to rob me of Alzire?

ALZIRE.

My sacred promise—

ZAMOR.

'Twas a guilty vow,
And binds thee not; perdition on thy oaths,
And thy false God, whom I abhor! farewell!

ALZIRE.

O stop, my Zamor.

ZAMOR.

Guzman is thy husband.

ALZIRE.

Do not upbraid but pity me.

ZAMOR.

O think

On our past loves.

ALZIRE.

I think but on thy danger.

ZAMOR.

Thou hast betrayed me.

ALZIRE.

No; I love thee still:
If 'tis a crime, I own, nay glory in it;
But hence, and leave me here to die alone;
Some dreadful purpose labors in thy breast:
How thy eyes roll! O Zamor—

ZAMOR.

'Tis resolved.

ALZIRE.

Where art thou going?

ZAMOR.

Glorious liberty,

I'll use thee nobly.

ALZIRE.

If thou diest remember

I perish with thee.

ZAMOR.

In this hour of terror
Thou talkest to me of love: but time is precious,
Conduct me, soldier; fare thee well.

SCENE V.

ALZIRE.

He's gone;
But where I know not: dreadful moment! Guzman,
For thee I quitted Zamor: haste, Emira,
Follow him, fly, return, and tell me all.
Thinkest thou that soldier will be faithful to us?
[*Exit Emira.*
I know not why, but something tells me here,
This day, for me, will be a day of horror.
O God of Christians, thou all-conquering power,
Whom yet I know not, O remove the cloud
From my dark mind; if by my fatal passion
I have offended thee, pour all thy vengeance
On me, but spare my Zamor; O conduct
His wandering footsteps through the dreary desert!
Is Europe only worthy of thy care?
Art thou the partial parent of one world,
And tyrant o'er another? all deserve
Thy equal love, the victor and the vanquished
Are all the work of thy creating hand.
But hark! what dreadful cry is that? methought
They called on Zamor—hark! again that noise!
It comes this way: my Zamor's lost.

SCENE VI.

ALZIRE, EMIRA.

ALZIRE.

Emira,
I'm glad thou art come: what hast thou seen, what done?
Where is he? speak, and ease my troubled soul.

EMIRA.

O it is past all hope; he cannot live:
Conducted safely by the faithful soldier
He passed the guards, then darting from him rushed
Towards the palace; trembling I pursued him,
Amidst the horrors of the silent night,
Almost to Guzman's chamber; there he escaped me,
Though oft I called on him, oft looked in vain:
I heard a dreadful shriek, some cried aloud,
He's dead: the palace is in arms: fly, madam,
And save yourself.

ALZIRE.

Let us begone, and help
My Zamor.

EMIRA.

What can we do for him?

ALZIRE.

Die.

SCENE VII.

ALZIRE, EMIRA, DON ALONZO, *Guards.*

ALONZO.

I've orders, madam, to secure you.

ALZIRE.

Slave,
What meanest thou? where's my Zamor?

ALONZO.

That I know not:
Permit me to conduct you.

ALZIRE.

Cruel fate!
I must not die then? Zamor is no more,
And yet I live, a captive, and in chains:
O ignominious!—dost thou weep, barbarian?
I must indeed be wretched, if my woes
Can touch a heart like thine; I'll follow thee;
If death awaits me, I obey with pleasure.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

ALZIRE, *Guards.*

ALZIRE.

Prepare your tortures, you who call yourselves
The judges of mankind; why am I left
In dread suspense, uncertain of my fate?
To live, or die? if I but mention Zamor
The guards around me tremble, and look pale,
His very name affrights them.

SCENE II.

MONTEZUMA, ALZIRE.

ALZIRE.

Ha! my father!

MONTEZUMA.

O my Alzire, what a scene of woe
Hath thy imprudent fatal passion brought

Among us! we were pleading for thy Zamor,
The good Alvarez had well nigh prevailed,
When on a sudden an armed soldier rushed
With violence in, and bore down all before him;
'Twas Zamor's self; with fury in his aspect,
And wild distraction, on he sprang to Guzman,
Attacked, and plunged the dagger in his breast:
The blood that issued from your husband's wound
Gushed on your father: Zamor then resigned,
With calm submission at Alvarez's feet
Fell humble; "take," he cried, "this guilty sword,
Stained with thy Guzman's blood, I am revenged;
Now nature calls on thee to do thy duty,
As I have mine; strike here;" then bared his breast
To the expected blow: the good Alvarez
Sunk breathless in my arms; confusion followed
And cries and horror; Guzman's friends upraised him,
Bound up his wounds, and tried by every art
Of medicine to preserve his life; the people
Accuse thee as accomplice in the deed,
And call for justice on thee.

ALZIRE.

And couldst thou——

MONTEZUMA.

O no; my heart suspects thee not, Alzire,
Thy soul I know is capable of error,
But not of guilt: alas! thou didst not see
The precipice before thee: Guzman dies
By Zamor's hand, thy husband by thy lover;
They will condemn thee to a shameful death,
But I will try if possible to move
The council in thy favor.

ALZIRE.

Do not sue
For me, my father, of these cruel tyrants,
Let but Alvarez live, and love me still,
I ask no more: Guzman's untimely fate
I must lament, because 'twas horrible,
Because, more dreadful still, he had deserved it:
Zamor avenged his wrongs, I cannot blame
Nor can I praise him for it; he must die;
Alzire wishes but to follow him.

ALVAREZ.

O heaven, assist me in this work of mercy!

SCENE III.

ALZIRE.

Now end all gracious power, this wretched being!
Alas! Alzire, the new God thou servest
Withholds thy hand, and says thou must not finish
Thy hated life; the deities I left
Denied me not the privilege to die.
Is it a crime to hasten on, perhaps
A few short years, the universal doom
Appointed for us all? and must we drink
The bitter cup of sorrow to the dregs?
In this vile body is there aught so sacred
That the free spirit should not leave at will
Its homely mansion? this all-conquering nation,
Shall they depopulate earth, destroy my race,
Condemn Alzire, and I not be mistress
Of my own life? Barbarians! Zamor then
Must die in tortures.

SCENE IV.

ZAMOR *in chains,* ALZIRE, *Guards.*

ZAMOR.

Yes, it is decreed:
We both must die; beneath the specious name
Of justice, the tribunal hath condemned us;
Guzman yet lives, my erring hand had left
Its work unfinished; the barbarian lives
To glut his vengeance with Alzire's blood,
To taste a tyrant's savage joy, and see us
Perish together—to pronounce our doom
Alvarez comes: I am the guilty cause;
Thou diest for me, Alzire.

ALZIRE.

Then no more,
For death is welcome if it comes with Zamor:
O bless the happy hour that shall dissolve
My ties to Guzman; I may love thee now
Without a crime, without remorse; receive
The heart that's due to thee, and thee alone:
Yon dreadful scaffold, for our death prepared,
Shall be the altar of my love; there, Zamor,
I'll offer up my faith, and expiate there
My crime of infidelity—the worst
Of all our sentence is, that it must come
From good Alvarez.

ZAMOR.

See, he's here; his cheeks
Are bathed in tears.

ALZIRE.

Alas! who most deserves
Compassion? this will be a dreadful parting.

SCENE V.

ALZIRE, ZAMOR, ALVAREZ, *Guards.*

ZAMOR.

From you we both expect to hear our fate,
Pronounce it, we are not afraid to die:
Zamor deserves it, he has slain thy son,
The son of good Alvarez, of my friend;
But what, my lord, has this fair innocent,
What has Alzire done? thou art not cruel,
Proud, and revengeful, like thy countrymen,
Distinguished by thy clemency, we loved
Alvarez; wilt thou give up the fair title
Of just and good, and bathe thee in the blood
Of innocence?

ALZIRE.

Avenge thyself, avenge
Thy son; but do not thus condemn the guiltless:
I am the wife of Guzman, that alone
Should tell thee, I would save, and not betray him,
Even though I hated, I respected him,
And swerved not from my faith, thou knowest I did not:
Careless of what the slandering multitude
May think, I rest my character on thee;
Acquitted by Alvarez, for the rest
'Tis equal all: if Zamor dies, Alzire
Must go with him: I pity thee alone.

ALVAREZ.

Amazing scene of tenderness and horror!
That he should be the murderer of my son
Who was my kind deliverer! O Zamor,
To thee I owe a life which I abhor;
It was a fatal gift, and bought too dear:
I am a father, yet I am a man;
Spite of a parent's grief that cries aloud
For vengeance on thee, gratitude pleads strongly;
She will be heard:—and thou who wert my daughter,
Whom yet I call by that dear tender name;
Think not I joy in the inhuman pleasure
Of fell revenge; I lose a friend, I lose
A daughter, and a son: the council dooms thee
To death, and bids a wretched father pass
The cruel sentence; I could not refuse
The dreadful task, and now am come, my children,
To save you both: it is in Zamor's power.

ZAMOR.

To save Alzire? say, what's to be done?

ALVAREZ.

Believe in Him who now inspires Alvarez;
One word will change your fate: the law decrees,
Whoe'er becomes a Christian meets forgiveness,
The God of pardon will himself o'ershade
Thy every crime, and take thee to his mercy;
Spain will protect and love thee as a brother;
Alzire shall be safe, ye both shall live;
I'll answer for her life as for thy own;
Zamor, to thee I speak; of thee I ask
Another life, I owe thee one already;
A father asks thee only to be happy,
To be a Christian, and to save Alzire.

ALZIRE.

What says my love? say, should we purchase life
So dearly? Shall I quit my gods for Guzman's,
And be a traitor? tell me, thou sage tyrant,
When I was master of thy fate, wouldst thou,
Had Zamor sued, have quitted thy own gods
For mine?

ALVAREZ.

I should have done as now I do,
Implored the almighty being to enlighten
A heart like thine, and make thee a true Christian.

ZAMOR.

O cruel contest! what am I to choose,
Or life or death, Alzire, or my gods,
Which must I leave? Alzire, 'tis thy cause,
Determine it; I think thou wouldst not bring
Dishonor on thy Zamor.

ALZIRE.

Hear me then:
Thou knowest that, to obey a father's will,
I gave another what to thee alone
I had devoted; I embraced his faith,
And worshipped Montezuma's God; perhaps
It was the error of my easy youth,
And thou wilt blame me for it; but methought
The law of Christians was the law of truth,
And therefore only did I make it mine
But to renounce those gods our heart adores;
That is no venial error, but a crime
Of deepest die; it is to give up both,
The God we worship, and the God we leave;
'Tis to be false to heaven, to the world,
And to ourselves: no, Zamor, if thou diest,

Die worthy of Alzire; hear the voice
Of conscience; act as she alone directs thee.

ZAMOR.

Thou hast determined as I thought thou wouldst,
Zamor shall die with honor.

ALVAREZ.

Then ye scorn
Our proffered mercy: hark! those mournful cries—

SCENE VII.

ALVAREZ, GUZMAN, ZAMOR, AMERICANS, *soldiers.*

ZAMOR.

O save Alzire; let me perish.

ALZIRE.

No:
I will be joined to Guzman, and to thee.

ALVAREZ.

My son is in the agonies of death;
O Guzman, hear me.

ZAMOR.

Look on Zamor, learn
Of him to die.

GUZMAN.

[*To Zamor.*
Perhaps I may teach thee
Another lesson: I have owed the world

A good example long, and now I mean
To pay the debt.

[*Turning to Alvarez.*

My soul is on the wing,
And ere she takes her flight but waits to see
And imitate Alvarez; O my father,
The mask is off, death has at last unveiled
The hideous scene, and showed me to myself;
New light breaks in on my astonished soul:
O I have been a proud, ungrateful being,
And trampled on my fellow-creatures: heaven
Avenges earth: my life can never atone
For half the blood I've shed: prosperity
Had blinded Guzman, death's benignant hand
Restores my sight; I thank the instrument
Employed by heaven to make me what I am.
A penitent: I yet am master here;
And yet can pardon: Zamor, I forgive thee,
Live and be free; but O remember how
A Christian acted, how a Christian died.

[*To Montezuma, who kneels to him.*

Thou, Montezuma, and ye hapless victims
Of my ambition, say my clemency
Surpassed my guilt, and let your sovereigns know,
That we were born your conquerors.

[*To Zamor.*

Observe
The difference, Zamor, 'twixt thy God and mine:
Thine teach thee to revenge an injury,
Mine to forgive and pity thee.

ALVAREZ.

My son,
Thy virtue's equal to thy courage.

ALZIRE.

Heaven!
How wonderful a change! amazing goodness!

ZAMOR.

Thou wilt oblige me to repent.

GUZMAN.

Yes, Zamor,
I will do more, thou shalt admire and love me:
Guzman too long hath made Alzire wretched,
I'll make her happy; with my dying hand
I give her to thee, live and hate me not,
Restore your country's ruined walls, and bless
My memory.

[*To Alvarez.*

Alvarez, be once more
A father to them, let the light of heaven
Shine forth upon them; Zamor is thy son,
Let him repair my loss.

ZAMOR.

Amazed, confounded,
And motionless I stand; can Christians boast
Of such exalted virtue? 'twas inspired
By heaven; the Christian's law must be divine:
Friendship, and faith, and constancy I knew
Already; but this soars above them all:
I must indeed admire and love thee, Guzman

[*Falls at his feet.*

ALZIRE.

My lord, permit me to embrace thy knees:
O I could die for Guzman; will you then
Forgive my weakness?

GUZMAN.

Yes: I pardon all,
I cannot see thee weep and not forgive thee.
Come near, my father, take my last farewell!
[*Dies.*

ALVAREZ.

[*To Montezuma.*

I see the hand of God in all our woes,
And humbly bend myself before that power
Who wounds to heal, and strikes but to forgive.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

ORESTES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ÆGISTHUS.

ORESTES, Son of Agamemnon and Clytemnæstra.

ELECTRA, } Sisters of Orestes.
IPHISA, }

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, Wife of Ægisthus.

PYLADES, Friend of Orestes.

PAMMENES, an old Man, attached to the Family of Agamemnon.

DIMAS, an Officer of the Guards.

ATTENDANTS.

SCENE, the seashore, a wood, a temple, a palace and a tomb, on one side: on the other, Argos at a distance.

ORESTES.

"Orestes" was produced in 1750, an experiment which intensely interested the literary world and the public. In his Dedicatory Letters to the Duchess of Maine, Voltaire has the following passage on the Greek drama:

"We should not, I acknowledge, endeavor to imitate what is weak and defective in the ancients: it is most probable that their faults were well known to their contemporaries. I am satisfied, Madam, that the wits of Athens condemned, as well as you, some of those repetitions, and some declamations with which Sophocles has loaded his *"Electra:"* they must have observed that he had not dived deep enough into the human heart. I will moreover fairly confess, that there are beauties peculiar not only to the Greek language, but to the climate, to manners and times, which it would be ridiculous to transplant hither. Therefore I have not copied exactly the *"Electra"* of Sophocles—much more I knew would be necessary; but I have taken, as well as I could, all the spirit and substance of it. The feast celebrated by *Ægisthus* and *Clytemnæstra,* which they called the feast of Agamemnon; the arrival of *Orestes* and *Pylades;* the urn which was supposed to contain the ashes of *Orestes;* the ring of *Agamemnon;* the character of *Electra,* and that of *Iphisa,* which is exactly the *Chrysothemis* of Sophocles; and above all, the remorse of *Clytemnæstra;* these I have copied from the Greek tragedy. When the messenger, who relates the fictitious story of the death

of *Orestes,* says to *Clytemnæstra:* 'I see, Madam, you are deeply affected by his death;' she replies, 'I am a mother, and must therefore be unhappy; a mother, though injured, cannot hate her own offspring:' she even endeavors to justify herself to *Electra,* with regard to the murder of *Agamemnon,* and laments her daughter. Euripides has carried *Clytemnæstra's* repentance still further. This, Madam, was what gained the applause of the most judicious and sensible people upon earth, and was approved by all good judges in our own nation. No character, in reality, can be more natural than that of a woman, criminal with regard to her husband, yet softened by her children; a woman, whose proud and fiery disposition is still open to pity and compassion, who resumes the fierceness of her character on receiving too severe reproaches, and at last sinks into submission and tears. The seeds of this character were in Sophocles and Euripides, and I have only unfolded them. Nothing but ignorance, and its natural attendant, presumption, can assert that the ancients have nothing worthy of our imitation: there is scarcely one real and essential beauty and perfection, for the foundation of which, at least, we are not indebted to them.

"I have taken particular care not to depart from that simplicity so strongly recommended by the Greeks, and so difficult to attain; the true mark of genius and invention, and the very essence of all theatrical merit. A foreign character, brought into "*Œdipus*" or "*Electra,*" who should play a principal part and draw aside the attention of the audience, would be a monster in the eyes of all those who have any knowledge of the ancients, or of that nature which they have so finely painted. Art and genius

consist in finding everything within the subject, and never going out of it in search of additional ornaments: but how are we to imitate that truly tragic pomp and magnificence which we find in the verses of Sophocles, that natural elegance and purity of diction, without which the piece, howsoever well conducted in other respects, must after all be but a poor performance!

"I have at least given my countrymen some idea of a tragedy without love, without confidants, and without episodes: the few partisans of good taste acknowledge themselves obliged to me for it, though the rest of the world withhold their approbation for a time, but will come in at last, when the rage of party is over, the injustice of persecution at an end, and the clouds of ignorance dissipated. You, Madam, must preserve among us those glittering sparks of light which the ancients have transmitted to us; we owe everything to them: not an art was born among us: everything was transplanted: but the earth that bears these foreign fruits is worn out, and our ancient barbarism, by the help of false taste, would break out again in spite of all our culture and improvement: and the disciples of Athens and Rome become Goths and Vandals, corrupted with the manners of the *Sybarites,* without the kind favor and protection of persons of your rank. When nature has given them either genius, or the love of genius, they encourage this nation, which is better able to imitate than to invent; and which always looks up towards the great for those instructions and examples which it perpetually stands in need of. All that I wish for, Madam, is, that some genius may be found to finish what I have but just sketched out; to free the stage from that effeminacy and

affectation which it is now sunk into; to render it respectable to the gravest characters; worthy of the few great masterpieces which we already have among us; worthy, in short, the approbation of a mind like yours, and all those who may hereafter endeavor to resemble you."

ORESTES.

ACT I. SCENE I.

IPHISA, PAMMENES.

IPHISA.

Sayest thou, Pammenes? shall these hated walls,
Where I so long have dragged a life of woe,
Afford at least the melancholy comfort
Of mingling sorrow with my dear Electra?
And will Ægisthus bring her to the tomb
Of Agamemnon, bring his daughter here,
To be a witness of the horrid pomp,
The sad solemnity, which on this day
Annual returns, to celebrate their crimes,
And make their guilt immortal?

PAMMENES.

O Iphisa,
Thou honored daughter of my royal master,
Like thee, confined within these lonely walls,
The secrets of a vile abandoned court
Do seldom reach Pammenes; but, 'tis rumored,
The jealous tyrant brings Electra here,
Fearful lest Argos, by her cries alarmed,
Should rise to vengeance; every heart, he knows,
Feels for the injured princess, therefore much
He dreads her clamors; with a watchful eye
Observes her conduct, treats her as a slave,
And leads the captive to adorn his triumph.

IPHISA.

Good heaven! and must Electra be a slave!
Shall Agamemnon's blood be thus disgraced
By a barbarian? Will her cruel mother,
Will Clytemnæstra bear the vile reproach
That on herself recoils, and all her race?
Perhaps my sister is too fierce of soul,
She mingles too much pride and bitterness
Of keen resentment with her griefs; alas!
Weak are her arms against a tyrant's power:
What will her anger, what her pride avail her?
They only irritate a haughty foe,
And cannot serve our cause: my fate at least
Is milder, and this solitary state
Shields me from wrongs which must oppress Electra.
Far from my father's foes, these pious hands
Can pay due offerings to his honored shade:
Far from his murderer, in this sad retreat
Freely I weep in peace, and curse Ægisthus:
I'm not condemned to see the tyrant here,
Save when the Sun unwillingly brings round
The fatal day that knit the dreadful tie,
When that inhuman monster shed the blood
Of Agamemnon, when base Clytemnæstra——

SCENE II.

ELECTRA, IPHISA, PAMMENES.

IPHISA.

O my Electra! art thou here? my sister—

ELECTRA.

The day of horror is returned, Iphisa:
The dreadful rites, the guilty feast prepared,
Have brought me hither; thy Electra comes,
Thy captive sister, comes a wretched slave,
To bear the tidings of their guilty joy.

IPHISA.

To see Electra is a blessing still,
It pours some joy into the bitter cup
Of sorrow, thus to mix my tears with thine.

ELECTRA.

Tears, my Iphisa! I have shed enough
Of them already: O thou bleeding ghost
Of my dead father, ever-honored shade,
Is that the tribute which I owe to thee?
I owe thee blood, and blood thou hast required;
Amidst the pomp of this dire festival,
Dragged by Ægisthus here, I will collect
My scattered spirits, shake off these vile chains,
And be my own avenger: yes, Iphisa,
This feeble arm shall reach the tyrant's heart:
Did not the cruel Clytemnæstra shed
A husband's blood? did I not see her lift
Her barbarous hand against him, and shall we
Suspend the blow, and let a murderer live?
O vengeance, and thou, animating virtue,
That dost inspire me, art thou not as bold
As daring guilt? we must revenge ourselves,
We must, Iphisa: fearest thou then to strike,
Fearest thou to die? shall Clytemnæstra's daughter,
The blood of Atreus fear? O rather lend
Thy aid, and join the desperate Electra!

IPHISA.

My dearest sister, moderate thy rage,
And calm thy troubled mind: against our foes
What can we bring but unavailing tears?
Who will assist us? who will lend us arms?
Or how shall we surprise a watchful king,
For guilt is ever fearful, by his guards
Surrounded? why, Electra, wilt thou court
Perpetual danger? should the tyrant hear
Thy loud complaints, I tremble for thy life.

ELECTRA.

Why let him hear them? I would have my grief
Sink to his heart, and poison all his joys:
Yes; I would have my cries ascend to heaven,
And bring the thunder down; would have them raise
A hundred kings, who never yet have dared,
Unworthy cowards as they are, to avenge
Great Agamemnon: but I pardon thee,
And the vain terrors of thy fearful soul,
That shrinks at danger; for he favors you,
I know he does, and only crushes me
Beneath his iron yoke: thou hast not been,
Like me, a wretched persecuted slave;
Thou didst not see the impious parricide,
The horrid[1] feast, the dire solemnity,

[1] Nothing could add more to the horror of the crime than such a circumstance. Clytemnæstra, not content with murdering her husband, instituted a solemn feast in commemoration of the happy event, and called it, with cruel raillery, "the supper of Agamemnon." Dinias, in his "History of Argos," informs us, it was on the thirteenth of the month Gamelion, which answers to the beginning of our January.

When Clytemnæstra—O the dreadful image
Is still before me, in this place, Iphisa,
Where now thou tremblest to declare thy wrongs,
There did these eyes behold our hapless father
Caught in the deadly snare: Pammenes heard
His dying groans, and ran with me to save him:
But when I came, what did I see! my mother
Plunging her ruthless dagger in his breast,
To rob him of the poor remains of life.

[*Turning to Pammenes.*

Thou sawest me take Orestes in my arms,
My dear Orestes; little knew he then
Of danger, but as near his murdered father
He stood, called out for aid to Clytemnæstra:
She, midst the horrors of the guilty scene,
Stopped for a moment short, and gave us time
Safe to convey the victim from Ægisthus.
Whether the tyrant has completed yet
The imperfect vengeance in Orestes' blood,
I know not: O my brother, dost thou live,
Or hast thou followed thy unhappy father?
Alas! I weep for him, and fear for thee.
These hands are loaded with inglorious chains,
And these sad eyes, forever bathed in tears,
See naught but guilt, oppression, and despair.

PAMMENES.

Ye dear remains of Atreus' honored race,
Whose splendor I have seen, whose woes I feel,
Permit a friend to fill your weeping souls
With cheerful hope, that ever waits propitious
To soothe affliction: call to mind what heaven
Long since hath promised, that its vengeful hand
Should one day lead Orestes to the place
Where we preserved him; that Ægisthus there,

Even at yon tomb, and on the fatal day
Marked for his impious triumph o'er the dead,
Should pay the forfeit of his crime: the Gods
Can ne'er deceive; in darkness still they veil
Their secret purpose from the eyes of men,
And punishment with slow but certain steps,
Still follows guilt.

IPHISA.

But wherefore stays so long
Their tardy vengeance? I have languished here
In grief and anguish many a tedious hour;
Electra, still more wretched, is in chains:
Meantime the proud oppressor lives in peace,
And glories in his crimes.

ELECTRA.

Thou seest, Pammenes,
Ægisthus still renews his cruel triumph,
And celebrates the fatal nuptials; still
A wretched exile lives my dear Orestes,
Forgetful of his father, and Electra.

PAMMENES.

But mark the course of time: he touches now
The age when manly strength, with courage joined,
May aid your purpose; hope for his return,
And trust in heaven.

ELECTRA.

We will: thou son of wisdom,
Thou good old man, O thou hast darted forth
A ray of hope on my despairing soul!
If with unpitying eye the gods beheld
Our miseries here, and proud oppression, still
Unpunished, trampled on the tender feet
Of innocence, what hand would crown their altars

With incense and oblation! but kind heaven
Will give Orestes to a sister's arms,
And blast the tyrant: hear my voice, Orestes,
O hear thy country's, hear the cries of blood,
That call thee forth; come from thy dreary caves,
And pathless deserts, where misfortune long
Hath tried thy courage; leave thy savage prey,
And all the roaming monsters of the forest,
To chase the beasts of Argos, to destroy
The tyrants of the earth, the murderers
Of kings; O haste, and let me guide thy hand
Even to the traitor's breast.

IPHISA.

No more: repress
Thy griefs, Electra; see, thy mother comes.

ELECTRA.

And have I yet a mother?

SCENE III.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, IPHISA.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Hence, and leave me;
You may retire, Pammenes; stay, my daughters.

IPHISA.

Alas! that sacred name dispels my fears.

ELECTRA.

And doubles mine.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Touching your fate, my children,
I came to lay a mother's heart before you.

Barren, thank heaven, hath been my second bed,
Nor brought a race of jealous foes to sow
Division here. Alas! my little race
Is almost run; the secret grief that long
Hath preyed on my sad heart will finish soon
A life of woe: spite of Ægisthus, still
I love my children; spite of all his rage,
Electra, thou who in thy infant years
So oft hast given me comfort, when the loss
Of Iphigenia, and her cruel father
Oppressed my soul; though now thy pride disdains
me,
And braves my power, thou art my daughter still;
Unworthy as thou art, there's still a place
In Clytemnæstra's heart for her Electra.

ELECTRA.

For me! O heaven, and am I yet beloved;
And dost thou feel for thy unhappy daughter?
O, if thou dost, behold her chains, behold
Yon tomb——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Unkind Electra, thus to wake
The sad remembrance! thou hast plunged a dagger
Into thy mother's breast; but I deserve it.

ELECTRA.

Thou hast disarmed Electra, nature pleads
A mother's cause; I own myself to blame
For all the bitterness of sorrow poured
In dreadful execrations on thy head.
By thee delivered to the tyrant's power,
I would have torn thee from him; I lament,
But cannot hate thee. O, if gracious heaven
Hath touched thy soul with wholesome penitence,
Obey its sacred will, and hear the voice

Of conscience, that commands thee to unloose
The horrid ties that bind thee to a wretch
Despised and hated; follow the great God
Who leads thy footsteps to the paths of virtue;
Call back your son, let him return to fill
The throne of his great ancestors, to scourge
A tyrant, to avenge his murdered father,
His sisters, and his mother: haste and send
For my Orestes.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Talk no more of that,
Electra, nor speak thus of my Ægisthus:
I grieve to see thee in these shameful bonds;
But know, a sovereign cannot tamely brook
Repeated insults, or embrace a foe:
You had provoked him to be cruel; I,
Who am but his first subject, oft have tried
To soothe his anger, but in vain: my words,
Instead of healing, but inflamed the wound:
Electra is indebted to herself
For all her deep-felt injuries; henceforth bend
To thy condition; let thy sister teach thee
That we must yield submissive to our fate,
If e'er we hope to change it. I could wish
To end my days in peace amongst my children;
But if thy rapid and imprudent zeal
Should bring Orestes here before the time,
His life might answer for it, and thy own,
If the king see him: though I pity thee,
Electra, yet I owe a husband more
Than a lost son, whom I have cause to fear.

ELECTRA.

O heaven, that monster! he thy husband, he!
And is it thus thou pitiest me? alas,

What will this poor, this light remorse avail thee,
This fleeting sorrow? was thy tenderness
But for a moment, dost thou threaten me,
[*To Iphisa.*
Is this, Iphisa, this a mother's love?
[*To Clytemnæstra.*
It seems thou threatenest my Orestes too;
Thou hast no cause to fear, nor I to hope
For him: alas! perhaps he is no more;
Perhaps Ægisthus, the detested tyrant,
He whom but now thou didst not blush to call
Thy husband, hath in secret ta'en his life.

IPHISA.

Believe me, Madam, when I call the gods
To witness, poor Electra and myself
Are strangers to the fate of dear Orestes;
Have pity then on your afflicted daughter,
Pity your helpless son and spare Electra:
She has been wronged; her tears and her reproaches
Suit well her fate, and ought to be forgiven.

ELECTRA.

I must not hope it, must not even complain;
And if Orestes lives but in my thoughts
'Tis deemed a crime. I know Ægisthus well,
Know his fierce nature; if he fears my brother,
He'll soon destroy him.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Know, thy brother lives;
If he's in danger, 'tis from thy imprudence;
Therefore be humble, moderate thy transports,
Respect thy mother: thinkest thou I come here,
Elate with joy, to lead the splendid triumph?
O no, to me it is a day of sorrow;

Thou weepest in chains, and I upon a throne.
I know the cruel vows thy hatred made
Against me: O, Electra! cease thy prayers,
The gods have heard thee but too well already:
Retire, and leave me.

SCENE IV.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

[*Alone.*

How it shocks my soul
To see my children! O the guilty bed!
My fatal marriage, and long prosperous crimes,
Adultery and murder, horrid bonds!
How ye torment me now! my little dream
Of happiness is o'er, and conscience darts
Its sudden rays on my affrighted soul.
How can Ægisthus live so long in peace!
Fearless he leads me on to share with him
These cruel triumphs; but my spirits fail,
My strength forsakes me, and I tremble now
At every omen; fear my subjects, fear
All Argos, Greece, Electra, and Orestes.
How dreadful 'tis to hate the blood that flowed
Congenial with our own, to dread the names
Which mortals hold so sacred and so dear!
But injured nature, banished from my heart,
Indignant frowns, and to avenge herself
Now bids me tremble at the name of son.

SCENE V.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Cruel Ægisthus, wherefore wouldst thou lead me
To this sad place, the seat of death and horror?

ÆGISTHUS.

Is then the solemn pomp, the feast of joy,
The sweet remembrance of our prosperous days,
Grown hateful to thee? is our marriage day
A day of horror?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

No: but here, Ægisthus,
There may be danger: my unhappy children
Have filled this heart with anguish: poor Iphisa
Weeps her hard lot; Electra is in chains;
This fatal place reminds me of the blood
We shed, reminds me of my dear Orestes,
Of Agamemnon.

ÆGISTHUS.

Let Iphisa weep,
And proud Electra rave; I bore too long
Her bitter taunts, 'tis fit her haughtiness
Should now be humbled; I'll not suffer her
To stir up foul rebellion in my kingdom,
To tell the factions that Orestes comes,
And call down vengeance on me; every hour
That hated name is echoed in my ear,
I must not bear it.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Ha! what name was that?
Orestes! O, I shudder at the thought
Of his approach: an oracle long since
Declared, that here, even at the fatal tomb
Whither thou leadest, his parricidal hand
Should one day rise vindictive, and destroy us.
Why therefore wouldst thou tempt the gods, why thus
Expose a life so dear to Clytemnæstra?

ÆGISTHUS.

Be not alarmed; Orestes ne'er shall hurt thee:
His be the danger; for I have sent forth
Some friends in search of him, and soon I hope
Shall see him in the toils; a wretched exile
From clime to clime he roams, and now it seems
In Epidaurus' gloomy forest hides
His ignominious head; but there perhaps
We have more friends than Clytemnæstra thinks of;
The king may serve us.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

But, my son——

ÆGISTHUS.

I know
He's fierce, implacable, revengeful; stung
By his misfortunes, all the blood of Atreus
Boils in his breast, and animates his rage.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Alas! my lord, his rage is but too just.

ÆGISTHUS.

Be it our business then to make it vain;
Thou knowest I've sent my Plisthenes in secret
To Epidaurus.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

But for what?

ÆGISTHUS.

To fix
My throne in safety, and remove thy fears:
Yes, Plisthenes, my son, by thee adopted
Heir to my kingdom, knows too well how much
His interest must depend on the event
E'er to neglect his charge: he is thy son,
Think of no other: had Electra's heart
Submissive yielded to another's counsels,
She had been happy in my Plisthenes:
But she shall feel the power which she contemns,
She and her haughty brother, her Orestes,
He may be found perhaps.——You seem disturbed.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Alas! Ægisthus, must we sacrifice
More victims? must I purchase length of days
With added guilt? Thou knowest whose blood we shed——
And must my son too perish, must I pay
So dear a price for life?

ÆGISTHUS.

Remember——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

No:
First let me ask the sacred oracle——

ÆGISTHUS.

What canst thou hope from gods or oracles,
Were they consulted on the blissful day
That gave Ægisthus to his Clytemnæstra?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Thou hast recalled a time when heaven, I fear,
Was much offended: love defies the gods,
But fear adores them; guilt weighs down my soul,
Do not oppress my feeble spirits; time,
That changes all, hath altered this proud heart;
The hand of heaven is on me, and subdues
The haughty rage that once inspired my breast;
Not that my tender friendship for Ægisthus
Can e'er decay, our interests are the same;
But to behold my daughter made a slave,
To think on my poor lost abandoned son,
To think that now, even now, perhaps he dies
By vile assassins, or, if living, lives
My foe, and hates the guilty Clytemnæstra,
Is it not dreadful? pity me, Ægisthus,
I am a mother still.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou art my wife;
Thou art my queen; resume thy wonted courage,
And be thyself again; indulge no more
This foolish fondness for ungrateful children,
Who merit not thy love; consult alone
Ægisthus' safety, and thy own repose.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Repose! the guilty mind can ne'er enjoy it.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Whither, my Pylades, hath cruel fate
Conducted us? alas! Orestes lives
But to increase the sorrows of his friend:
Our arms, our treasures, and our soldiers lost
In the rude storm; here on this desert coast,
No succor near, deserted and forlorn
We wander on, and naught but hope remains.
Where are we?

PYLADES.

That I know not; but since fate
Hath led us hither, let us not despair;
It is enough for me, Orestes lives:
Be confident; the barbarous Ægisthus
In vain pursued thy life, which heaven preserved
In Epidaurus, when thy arm subdued
The gallant Plisthenes: let naught alarm
Or terrify thy soul, but boldly urge
Thy way, protected by that guardian God
Who watches o'er the just, the great avenger,
Who hath already to thy valor given
The son, and promised that ere long the father
Shall follow him.

ORESTES.

Alas, my friend, that God
In anger now withdraws his powerful aid,
And frowns upon us, as thy cruel fate
Too plainly shows; a terrible example!
But say, within the rock didst thou conceal

The urn, which to Mycenæ, horrid seat
Of murder, by the gods command, we bear;
That urn which holds the ashes of my foe,
Of Plisthenes; with that we must deceive
The tyrant.

PYLADES.

I have done it.

ORESTES.

Gracious heaven!
When shall we reap the fruits of our obedience?
When will the wished-for day of vengeance come?
Shall I again behold my native soil,
The dear, the dreadful place where first I saw
The light of day? Where shall I find my sister,
The pride, the glory, of admiring Greece;
That generous maid, whom all unite to praise,
But none will dare to succor? She preserved
My life; and, worthy of her noble father,
Hath never bent beneath the oppressive hand
Of power, but braved the fury of the storm.
How many kings, how many heroes, fought
For Menelaus! Agamemnon dies,
And Greece forgets him, whilst his hapless son,
Deserted, wanders o'er a faithless world,
To seek some blest asylum for repose.
Alas, without thy friendship I had been
The most distressed, most abject of mankind:
But heaven, in pity to my woes, hath sent
My Pylades; it would not let me perish,
But gave me to subdue my hated foe,
And half avenge my father: say, my friend,
What path will lead us to the tyrant's court?

PYLADES.

Behold that palace, and the towering height

Of yon proud temple, the dark grove overgrown
With cypress, and the tomb, rich images
Of mournful splendor all: and see! this way
Advancing, comes a venerable sage,
Of mildest aspect, and whose years, no doubt,
Have long experience of calamity;
His soul will melt at thy disastrous fate.

ORESTES.

Is every mortal born to suffer? hark!
He groans, my Pylades.

SCENE II.

ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

PYLADES.

Whoe'er thou art,
Stop, and inform us: we are strangers here.
Two poor unhappy friends, long time the sport
Of winds and waves, now on this unknown shore
Cast helpless, canst thou tell us if this place
Will be or fatal to us, or propitious?

PAMMENES.

I am a simple, plain old man, and here
Worship the gods, adore their justice, live
In humble fear of them, and exercise
The sacred rights of hospitality;
Ye both are welcome to my little cottage,
There to despise with me the pride of kings,
Their pomp and riches; come, my friends, for such
I ever hold the wretched.

ORESTES.

Generous stranger,
May gracious heaven inspire us with the means
To recompense thy goodness! but inform us
What place is this; who is your king?

PAMMENES.

Ægisthus:
I am his subject.

ORESTES.

Terrors, crimes, and vengeance!
O heaven, Ægisthus!

PYLADES.

Soft: do not betray us;
Be careful.

ORESTES.

Gods, Ægisthus! he who murdered——

PAMMENES.

The same.

ORESTES.

And Clytemnæstra, lives she still
After that fatal blow.

PAMMENES.

She reigns with him;
The rest is known too well.

ORESTES.

That tomb before us,
And yonder palace——

PAMMENES.

Is inhabited
Now by Ægisthus; built, I well remember,

By worthier hands, and for a better use.
The tomb thou seest, forgive me if I weep
At the remembrance, is the tomb of him
I loved, my lord, my king—of Agamemnon.

ORESTES.

O 'tis too much! I sink beneath it.

PYLADES.

Hide
Thy tears, my friend.

[*To Orestes, who turns away from him.*

PAMMENES.

You seem much moved, and fain
Would stop the tide of grief: O give it way,
Indulge thy sorrows, and lament the son
Of gods, the noble conqueror of Troy;
Whilst they insult his sacred memory here,
Strangers shall weep the fate of Agamemnon.

ORESTES.

A stranger as I am, I cannot look
With cold indifference on the noble race
Of Atreus, 'tis a Grecian's duty ever
To weep the fate of heroes, and I ought——
But doth Electra live in Argos still?

PAMMENES.

She doth, she's here.

ORESTES.

I run, I fly to meet her.

PYLADES.

Ha! whither wouldst thou go! What! brave the gods
Hazard thy precious life! forbear, my lord.

[*To Pammenes.*

O, sir, conduct us to the neighboring temple,

There will we lay our gifts before the altar
In humble duty, and adore that God
Who ruled the waves, and saved us from destruction.

ORESTES.

Wilt thou conduct us to the sacred tomb
Where lie the ashes of a murdered hero?
There must I offer to his honored shade
A secret sacrifice.

PAMMENES.

O heavenly justice,
Thou sacrifice to him! amidst his foes!
O noble youth! my master had a son,
Who, in Electra's arms—but I forbear,
Ægisthus comes: away; I'll follow you.

ORESTES.

Ægisthus! ha!

PYLADES.

We must avoid his presence.

SCENE III.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, PAMMENES.

ÆGISTHUS.

[*To Pammenes.*

Who are those strangers? one of them methought
Seemed, by his stately port and fair demeanor,
Of noble birth, a gloom of melancholy
Hangs on his brow: he struck me as he passed:
Is he our subject? knowest thou whence he came?

PAMMENES.

I only know they are unfortunate;
Driven by the tempest on those rocks, they came
For shelter here; as strangers I relieved them;
It was my duty: if they tell me truth,
Greece is their country.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou shalt answer for them
On peril of thy life.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Alas! my lord,
Can these poor objects raise suspicion?

ÆGISTHUS.

Yes:
The people murmur; everything alarms me.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Such for these fifteen years hath been our fate,
To fear, and to be feared; the bitter poison
To all my happiness.

ÆGISTHUS.

Away, Pammenes;
Let me know who and whence they are; why thus
They come so near the palace; from what port
Their vessel sailed, and wherefore on the seas
Where I command: away, and bring me word.

SCENE IV.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

Well, madam, to remove thy idle fears,
The interpreters of heaven it seems at length
Have been consulted; but in vain: their silence
Doubles thy grief, and heightens thy despair;
For to thyself, thy restless spirit ne'er
Will know repose; thou tremblest at the thought
Of thy son's death, yet fearest his dangerous life:
Consult no more thy doubtful oracles,
And hesitating priests, that brood in secret
O'er the dark bosom of futurity;
But hear Ægisthus, he shall give thee peace,
And satisfy thy soul: this hand determines,
This tongue pronounces Clytemnæstra's fate:
If thou wouldst live and reign, confide in me,
And me alone, and let me hear no more
Of your unworthy son; but for Electra,
She's to be feared, and we must think of her:
Perhaps her marriage with my Plisthenes
Might stop the mouth of faction, and appease
The discontented people: thou wouldst wish
To see the deadly hatred, that so long
Hath raged between us, softened into peace;
To see our interests and our hearts united:
Let it be so. Go thou, and talk with her;
But take good heed her pride refuses not
The proffered boon, that were an insult soon
She might repent of; but I hope with you,
That slavery hath bowed down her haughty spirit,

That this unhoped for, unexpected change
From poverty and chains to rank and splendor,
Joined to a mother's kind authority,
And above all, to Ambition, will persuade her
To seize the golden minutes, and be wise:
But if she spurns the happiness that courts her,
Her insolence shall meet its due reward.
Your foolish fondness, and her father's name,
Have fed her pride too long; but let her dread,
If she submits not, a severer fate,
Chains heavier far, and endless banishment.

SCENE V.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Come near, my daughter, and with milder looks
Behold thy mother: I have mourned in secret,
And wept with thee thy hard and cruel bondage,
Though not unmerited; for sure thy hatred
Was most unjust, Electra: as a queen,
I was offended; as a mother, grieved;
But I have gained your pardon, and your rights
Are all restored.

ELECTRA.

O madam, at your feet——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

But I would still do more.

ELECTRA.

What more?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Support
Your race, restore the honored name of Pelops,
And re-unite his long-divided children.

ELECTRA.

Ha! talkest thou of Orestes? speak, go on.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

I speak of thee, and hope at last Electra
Will be Electra's friend: I know thy soul
Aspires to empire, be thyself again,
And let thy hopes transport thee to the throne
Of Argos and Mycenæ; rise from chains
And ignominious slavery to the throne
Of thy great ancestors: Ægisthus yields
To my entreaties, as a daughter yet
He would embrace thee, to his Plisthenes
Would join Electra; every hour the youth
From Epidaurus is expected here;
When he returns he weds you: look, my daughter,
Towards the bright prospect of thy future glory,
And bury all the past in deep oblivion.

ELECTRA.

Can I forget the past, or look with joy
On that which is to come? O cruel fate,
This is the worst indignity that e'er
Electra bore: remember whence I sprang,
Remember, I am Agamemnon's daughter,
And wouldst thou bind me to his murderer's son?
Give me my chains again, oppress my soul
With all the horrors of base servitude;
All that the tyrant e'er inflicted on me,
Shame and reproach suit with my sad condition;
I have supported them, and looked on death

Without a fear: a thousand times Ægisthus
Hath threatened me with death, but this is worse;
Thou art more cruel far to ask my vows,
My love, my honor; but I see your aim,
I know your purpose; poor Orestes slain,
His murderer trembles at a sister's claim,
And dreads my title to a father's throne:
The tyrant wants my hand to second him,
To seal his poor precarious rights with mine,
And make me an accomplice in his guilt:
O, if I have a right Ægisthus fears,
Let him erase my title in my blood,
And tear it from me: if another arm
Be needful to his purpose, lend him thine;
Strike here, and join Electra to her brother;
Strike here, and I shall know 'tis Clytemnæstra.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

It is too much: ungrateful as thou art,
I pitied thee; but all my hopes are past:
What have I done, what would I do, to bend
Thy stubborn heart? tears, menaces, reproaches,
And love and tenderness, the throne itself,
Which but for me thou never couldst have hoped,
Prayers, punishment, and pardon, naught availed,
And now I yield thee to thy fate: farewell!
Thou sayest that thou shalt know me for thy mother,
For Clytemnæstra, by my cruelty:
I am thy mother, and I am thy queen,
Remember that; to Agamemnon's race
Naught do I owe but hatred and revenge;
I will not warm a serpent in my breast
To sting me: henceforth storm, complain, and weep,
I shall not heed the clamors of a slave:
I loved thee once, with grief I own I loved thee;
But from this hour remember Clytemnæstra

Is not thy mother, but Ægisthus' wife;
The bonds are broken that united us,
Electra broke them; nature hath disclaimed,
And I abjure them.

SCENE VI.

ELECTRA.

[*Alone.*

Gracious heaven! is this
A mother's voice? O day the bitterest sure
That ever rose since my dear father's death!
I fear I said too much, but my full heart,
Spite of myself, would pour its venom forth:
She told me my Orestes was no more;
Could I bear that? O if a cruel mother
Has robbed me of my best, my dearest treasure,
Why should I court my worst of foes, why fawn
And cringe to her, to live a vile dependant
On her precarious bounties; to lift up
These withered hands to unrelenting heaven,
To see my father's bed and throne usurped
By this base spoiler, this inhuman tyrant,
Who robbed me of a mother's heart, and now
Hath taken Orestes from me?

SCENE VII.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

IPHISA.

O Electra,
Complain no more.

ELECTRA.

Why not?

IPHISA.

Partake my joy.

ELECTRA.

Joy is a stranger to this heart, Iphisa,
And ever shall be.

IPHISA.

Still there is hope.

ELECTRA.

O no,
Still must we weep: for if I may believe
A mother, our dear brother, our Orestes,
Is dead.

IPHISA.

And if I may believe these eyes,
He lives, he's here, Electra.

ELECTRA.

Can it be?
Good heaven! O do not trifle with a heart
Like mine: Iphisa, didst thou say Orestes?

IPHISA.

I did.

ELECTRA.

Thou wouldst not with a flattering dream
Deceive me, my Iphisa—but, go on,
For hope and fear distract me.

IPHISA.

O my sister,
Two strangers, cast by some benignant God

On these unhappy coasts, are just arrived,
And hither, by the care of good Pammenes,
Conducted; one of them——

ELECTRA.

I faint: die—
Well, one of them——

IPHISA.

I saw the noble youth:
O what a lustre sparkled in his eye!
His air, his mien, his every gesture bore
The perfect semblage of a demi-god;
Even as they paint the illustrious Grecian chief,
The conqueror of Troy; such majesty
And sweet deportment ne'er did I behold;
But with Pammenes he retired, and hid
His beauteous form from my desiring eyes:
Struck with the charming image, and amazed,
I ran to seek thee here, beneath the shade
Of this dark grove, to tell the pleasing tale:
But mark what followed—on the sacred tomb,
Where we so oft have mingled our sad tears,
I saw fresh garlands, saw the votive wreath,
The water sprinkled over it, and the hair
Doubtless of those whom I so late had seen,
The illustrious strangers: near to these was laid,
What most confirmed my hopes, a glittering sword,
That spoke methought the day of vengeance near:
Who but a son, a brother, and a hero,
Raised by the gods to save his falling country,
Would dare to brave the tyrant thus? 'Tis he,
Electra, heaven hath sent him to our aid,
The lightning glares upon us, and the thunder
Will soon be heard.

ELECTRA.

I must believe Iphisa,
And hope the best; but is it not a snare
Laid by the tyrant? Come: we'll know the truth,
Let us away—I must be satisfied.

IPHISA.

We must not search him in the dark retreat
Where he is hid. Pammenes says, his life
Would answer for it.

ELECTRA.

Ha! what dost thou say?
Alas! we are deceived, betrayed, Iphisa,
By cruel heaven: thus, after fifteen years,
Restored, Orestes would have run with joy
To the dear arms that saved him, would have cheered
Electra's mournful heart, he ne'er had fled
From thee, Iphisa: O that sword thou sawest,
Which raised thy sanguine hope, alarms my fears;
A cruel mother would be well informed,
And in her eyes I read the barbarous joy
She felt within: O dart one ray of hope,
Ye vengeful gods, on my despairing soul!
Will not Pammenes yield to my entreaties?
He will; he must: away, I'll speak to him.

IPHISA.

Do not, Electra; think what cruel eyes
Watch o'er our steps, and mark our every action.
If he is come, we shall discover him
By our fond zeal, and hazard his sweet life:
If we're deceived, our search but irritates
The tyrant, and endangers good Pammenes:
But let us pay our duty at the tomb,

There we at least may weep without offence.
Who knows, Electra, but the noble stranger
May meet us in that blest asylum; there
That heaven, whose goodness thy impatient rage
Hath called in question, may yet hear my vows,
And give him to our wishes and our tears:
Let us be gone.

ELECTRA.

Thou hast revived my hopes:
But O, I die with grief, if thou deceivest me!

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

[*A slave at the farther end of the stage carrying an urn and a sword.*

PAMMENES.

Blest be the day that to our wishes thus
Restores the long-expected hope of Greece,
My royal master's son, the minister
Of heaven's high will, to execute swift vengeance
On Agamemnon's foes! The tyrant long
Hath dreaded, long foreseen the impending blow;
Conscious of guilt, in every face unknown
Still he beholds his master and his judge,
And still Orestes haunts his troubled soul:
Much he inquires concerning you, and longs
To see you both. I have a thousand fears,
A thousand hopes; heaven grant we may succeed!
Meantime I have obeyed your orders, sounded
The people's hearts, and strove to animate

Their zeal; inspired them with the distant hope
Of an avenger; soon or late the race
Of rightful kings must prosper: every heart
Glowed with warm transport at Orestes' name;
Awakened from her slumber, vengeance rises
With double vigor; my few faithful friends,
Who dwell in this lone desert with Pammenes,
Lift up their hands to heaven, and call on thee;
And yet I tremble to behold thee here
Unarmed and unassisted, lest some chance
Discover thee, and blast our hopes: the foe
Is barbarous, active, vigilant, and bold;
One fatal stroke may ruin all; whilst thou,
Against a tyrant seated on his throne,
Bringest nothing but Orestes, and his friend.

PYLADES.

And are not they sufficient? 'Tis the work
Of heaven that oft fulfils its own designs
By means most wonderful, that in the deep
O'erwhelmed our little all, and here alone
Hath left us to perform the sacrifice.
Sometimes it arms the sovereigns of the earth
With tenfold vengeance; sometimes, in contempt
Of human valor, strikes in awful silence;
Nature and friendship then assert the rights
Of heaven, and vindicate its power divine.

ORESTES.

Orestes asks no other aid, no arm
But thine, my Pylades.

PYLADES.

Take heed, my friend,
Quit not the paths of safety pointed out
By the just gods; remember thou art bound

By solemn oath to hide thee from Electra;
Thy peace, thy happiness, thy kingdom, all
Depend upon it: O refrain thy transports,
Dissemble, and obey; 'tis fit Electra
Should be deceived, even more than Clytemnæstra.

PAMMENES.

Thank heaven, that thus ordained it for thy safety.
Already hath Electra, bathed in tears,
And calling for her great avenger, filled
These solitary mansions with her cries;
Importunate and bold, she sought me out,
And with imprudent warmth, demanded loud,
Where was her brother, where her dear Orestes:
Nature had whispered to her anxious heart
He was not far from his Electra: scarce
Could I withhold her eager steps.

ORESTES.

Ye gods!
Must I refrain? O insupportable!

PYLADES.

You hesitate; O think, my dear Orestes,
Think on the menaces of angry heaven,
Think on its goodness that preserved thy life
From every danger; if thou shouldst oppose
Its sacred will, eternal wrath awaits
To blast thy purpose; tremble, son of Atreus
And Tantalus, remember what thy hapless race
Hath suffered, nor expect a milder doom.

ORESTES.

What power invincible presides unseen
O'er human actions, and directs our fate?
Is it a crime to listen to the voice
Of fond affection? O eternal justice,

Thou deep abyss, unsearchable to man!
Shall not our weakness and our guilt by thee
Be still distinguished? shall the man who wanders
From virtue's paths unknowing, and who braves
Thy power, shall he who yields to nature's laws,
And he who breaks them, share an equal fate?
But shall the slave condemn his master? heaven
Gave us our being, and can owe us nothing:
Therefore no more: in silence I obey.
Give me the urn, the ring, and bloody sword,
Which thou hast hither brought, they shall be offered
Far from Electra's sight: let us be gone;
I'll see my sister when I have avenged her.

[*Turning to Pammenes.*

Go thou, Pammenes, and prepare the hearts
Of thy brave followers for the great event
Which Greece awaits, and I must execute:
Deceive Ægisthus, and my guilty mother;
Let them enjoy the transitory bliss,
The short-lived pleasure of Orestes' death,
If an unnatural mother can behold
With joy the ashes of a murdered son:
Here will I wait, and stop them as they pass.

SCENE II.

ELECTRA *and* IPHISA *on one side of the stage* ORESTES *and* PYLADES *on the other, with a slave carrying an urn and a sword.*

ELECTRA.

[*To Iphisa.*

Hope disappointed is the worst of sorrows.
O my Iphisa, all thy flattering dreams

Are vanished, and Pammenes, with a word,
Hath undeceived us; the fair day that shone
So bright is clouded o'er, and darkness spreads
On every side: alas! our wretched life
Is but a round of never-ending woes.

ORESTES.

[*To Pylades.*

Two women, and in tears!

PYLADES.

Alas, my lord,
Beneath a tyrant all things wear the face
Of grief and misery.

ORESTES.

In Ægisthus' court
Nothing should reign but sorrow.

IPHISA.

[*To Electra.*

Look, Electra,
The strangers come this way.

ELECTRA.

Unhappy omen!
They did pronounce Ægisthus' hated name.

IPHISA.

One is that hero whom I told thee of,
The noble youth——

ELECTRA.

[*Looking at Orestes.*

Alas! I too, like thee,
Have been deceived.

[*Turning to Orestes.*

Who are ye, wretched strangers;
And what hath led you to this fatal shore?

ORESTES.

We come to see the king who reigns in Argos,
And take our orders from him.

ELECTRA.

Are ye Grecians,
And call ye him a king, the murderer
Of Agamemnon?

ORESTES.

He is sovereign here,
And heaven commands us to respect his throne,
Not to dispute his title.

ELECTRA.

Horrid maxim!
And what have you to ask of this proud king,
This bloody monster here?

ORESTES.

We come to bring him
Some happy tidings.

ELECTRA.

Dreadful then to us
They must be.

IPHISA.

[*Seeing the Urn.*
Ha! an urn! O grief, O horror!

PYLADES.

Orestes——

ELECTRA.

O ye gods! Orestes dead!
I faint, I die.

"FAIR PRINCESS, BE COMFORTED AND LIVE"

ORESTES.

What have we done, my friend!
They could not be mistaken, for their grief
Betrays them: O! my blood runs cold.—Fair princess,
Be comforted, and live.

ELECTRA.

Orestes dead?
And can I live? O no, barbarians, here
Complete your cruelty.

IPHISA.

Alas! you see
The poor remains of Agamemnon; we
Are his unhappy daughters, the sad sisters
Of lost Orestes.

ORESTES.

O Electra! O
Iphisa! O where am I? cruel gods!
[*To the slave carrying the urn.*
Take from their sight those monuments of woe,
That fatal urn, which——

ELECTRA.

[*Running towards the urn.*
Wouldst thou take it from me?
Wouldst thou deprive me of the little all
That's left Electra by offended heaven?
O give it me.
[*She takes the urn, and embraces it.*

ORESTES.

Forbear; what wouldst thou do?

PYLADES.

Away: Ægisthus only must receive
These precious relics.

ELECTRA.

Must I then behold
My brother's ashes in a tyrant's hand,
And are Orestes' murderers before me?

ORESTES.

Horrid reproach! it shocks my very soul:
I can no longer——

ELECTRA.

Yet you weep with me:
O, in the name of the avenging gods,
If ye are guiltless, if your generous hands
Collected his dear ashes———

ORESTES.

Gracious heaven!

ELECTRA.

If ye lament his death, O answer me:
Who told you of his fate: art thou his friend?
Speak, noble youth: both dumb! yet both afflicted:
Even whilst your words plant daggers in my heart,
Ye seem to pity me.

ORESTES.

It is too much;
The gods have been obeyed enough already.

ELECTRA.

What sayest thou?

ORESTES.

Leave those poor remains.

ELECTRA.

O no:
I never will: alas! is every heart
Inflexible? I tell thee, cruel stranger,
I must not, cannot give thee back again
The fatal gift thy pity hath bestowed:
'Tis my Orestes; and I will embrace him:
Behold his dying sister.

ORESTES.

Cruel gods!
Where are your thunders now? O strike: Electra,
I can no longer——

ELECTRA.

Ha!

ORESTES.

I ought——

PYLADES.

O heaven!

ELECTRA.

Go on——

ORESTES.

Know then——

SCENE III.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, IPHISA, PAMMENES, *Guards.*

ÆGISTHUS.

O glorious spectacle!
Fortune, I thank thee: Can it be, Pammenes?

My rival dead! it is, it must be true,
Electra's grief confirms it.

ELECTRA.

Dreadful hour?

ORESTES.

To what am I reserved?

ÆGISTHUS.

Seize on the urn,
And wrest it from her.

[*They take the urn from her.*

ELECTRA.

O thou hast robbed me of the only good
This life could e'er afford me, barbarous monster!
O take Electra too, tear forth this heart
And join me to Orestes; father, son,
Sister, and brother, all thy wretched victims
Unite to satiate thy revenge: now, tyrant,
Enjoy thy happiness, enjoy thy crimes:
And thou, inhuman mother, look with him
On the delightful spectacle, it suits
Thy nature, and is worthy of you both.

[*Iphisa leads her off.*

SCENE IV.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, *Guards.*

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Must I bear this?

ÆGISTHUS.

She shall be punished for it:
Let her complain to heaven, for heaven itself
Will justify Ægisthus; it approves
Where it forbids not; therefore I am guiltless,
And happy too: my throne stands firmly now,
My life's in safety; but I must reward
The zeal and valor of these noble Grecians.

ORESTES.

It was our duty, royal sir, to lay
These proofs before you: take this sword, this ring,
You must remember it: 'twas Agamemnon's.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

And was it then by thee Orestes fell?

ÆGISTHUS.

If thou hast served me, thine be the reward:
But, say, who art thou, of what race?

ORESTES.

My name
Must not as yet be known; perhaps hereafter
It may be: in the fields of Troy my father
Distinguished shone amongst the great avengers
Of Menelaus; in those days of glory
He fought, and fell: deserted and forlorn,
Left by a cruel mother, and pursued
By most inhuman foes, this friend alone
Supported me; was fortune, father, all;
With him I still have trod the paths of honor,
With him defied the malice of my fate:
Such is my story.

ÆGISTHUS.

But say where thy arm
Avenged me of this hated prince: inform me.

ORESTES.

'Twas a word that to the temple leads
Of Epidaurus, near Achemor's tomb.

ÆGISTHUS.

The king had set a price upon his head:
How came you not to ask for your reward?

ORESTES.

Because I hated infamy, and fought
For vengeance, not for hire; I did not mean
To sell his blood; a private motive raised
This arm against him, as my friend well knows,
And I revenged myself without the aid
Of kings, nor shall I boast the victory:
Forgive me, sir: I tremble; for the widow
Of Agamemnon's here; perhaps I've served,
Perhaps offended her; I'll take my leave.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou shalt not; stay, I charge thee.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Let him go:
That urn, and the sad story he has told,
Have filled my soul with horror: heaven, my lord,
Protects your throne and life, be thankful for it,
And leave a mother to indulge her sorrows.

ORESTES.

Madam, I thought that Agamemnon's son
Was hateful to you.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

I must own I feared him.

ORESTES.

Feared him?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

I did indeed; for he was born
To be most guilty.

ORESTES.

Guilty? and to whom?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

The wretched wanderer, thou knowest, was doomed
To hate a mother, doomed to shed the blood
From whence he sprang; such was his horrid fate:
Perhaps he had fulfilled—and yet, his death,
I know not why, affrights me, and I tremble
To look on you who saved me from his vengeance.

ORESTES.

Alas! a son against a mother armed!
O who could loose that sacred tie? perhaps
He wished——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

O heaven!

ÆGISTHUS.

What sayest thou? didst thou know him?

PYLADES.

[*Aside.*

He will discover all.

[*To Ægisthus.*

He did, my lord,
The wretched soon unite, and soon divide:
At Delphi first we saw him.

ORESTES.

Yes: I know
His purpose well.

ÆGISTHUS.

What was it?

ORESTES.

To murder thee.

ÆGISTHUS.

I've seen his malice long, but I despised it.
Meantime Electra used Orestes' name
To spread division o'er my kingdom; she
Was my worst foe: thou hast avenged me of her,
Take thy reward, I yield her to thy power;
She shall be thine: the haughty maid, who spurned
The great alliance with Ægisthus' son;
Henceforth she is thy slave: the wretched race
Of Priam long beneath the conqueror's yoke
Submissive bowed, and dragged the servile chain;
And wherefore should not Agememnon's blood
Bend in its turn, and share an equal fate?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Would Clytemnæstra suffer that!

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou wouldst not
Defend thy worst of foes; proscribe Orestes,
Yet spare Electra.

[*To Orestes.*

Leave the urn with me.

ORESTES.

We will, my lord, and shall accept your offer.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

That were to carry our resentment further
Than justice warrants: let him hence, and bear
Some other recompense: we too must go:

Let us, my lord, I beg thee, let us quit
These horrid mansions of the dead, where naught
But dreadful images on every side
Surrounds me: O we never can prepare
The bloody feast between the father's tomb
And the son's ashes! How shall we invoke
The household gods, whom we have injured; how,
Amidst our cruel sports, give up the blood
Of Clytemnæstra to the murderer
Of her Orestes? O it must not be!
I tremble at the thought: my fears, Ægisthus,
Should waken thine: this stranger rives my heart;
His very sight is deadliest poison to me.
Away, my lord, and let me be concealed
From every eye; would it were possible
To hide me from myself!

[*Exit Clytemnæstra.*

ÆGISTHUS.

[*To Orestes.*

Stay thou, and wait
Till time befriend thee; nature for a moment
Is clamorous and loud, but soon as reason
Shall reassume its empire, interest then
Must plead thy cause, and she alone be heard.
Meantime remain with us, and celebrate
Our nuptial day:

[*To one of his attendants.*

Haste you to Epidaurus,
And hither bring my son; let him confirm
The welcome tidings.

SCENE V.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Yes, Orestes comes
To join the cruel pomp, and make thy feast
A feast of blood.

PYLADES.

O how I trembled for thee!
I feared thy love; I feared thy tenderness;
And, more than all, thy honest rage, that burst
In transports forth when thou beheldest the tyrant:
I saw thee ready to insult him; saw
Thy soul take fire at Agamemnon's name,
And dreaded the sad consequence.

ORESTES.

My mother,
O, Pylades, my mother pierced my heart.
Didst thou not mark the workings of her soul
Whilst I was speaking? O I felt them all!
Scarce could my voice in faltering accents tell
The melancholy tale, whilst Clytemnæstra
Still gazed, and trembled still: a father's murder;
A sister unrevenged; a tyrant yet
Unpunished; and a mother to be taught
Her interest and her duty; what a weight
Of secret cares! great heaven complete thy work!
Urge on the lingering moments that retard
My vengeance; O, let me perform the task
Of love, and hatred; let me mix the blood
Of base Ægisthus with the vile remains

Of Plisthenes; let sweet Electra see
The cruel tyrant gasping at my feet,
And know her dear deliverer in Orestes!

SCENE VI.

ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

ORESTES.

What hast thou done, Pammenes, may we hope—

PAMMENES.

O my dear lord, never, since the fatal day
When Agamemnon fell, did greater perils
Threaten thy precious life.

ORESTES.

Ha! what hath happened?

PYLADES.

Still
Must I have cause to tremble for Orestes?

PAMMENES.

This instant is arrived a messenger
From Epidaurus, and ere this related
The death of Plisthenes.

PYLADES.

Immortal gods!

ORESTES.

And knows he that Orestes slew his son?

PAMMENES.

They speak of nothing but his death; ere long
Fresh tidings are expected; and the news

Meantime concealed from Greece that she has lost
One of her tyrants; the king, still in doubt,
Shuts himself up with Clytemnæstra: this
I learned from one, who, to the royal blood
Still faithful, pines in loathsome servitude
Beneath the proud usurper.

ORESTES.

I have gathered
At least the first fair fruits of promised vengeance;
Grant me, ye gods, to reap a plenteous harvest!
Thinkest thou, my friend, they would uplift this arm
In vain, and only prosper to deceive me;
To my successful valor give the son,
And after yield me to the father's power?
Let us away: danger should make us bold;
Who fears not death is master of his foe;
I'll seize the moment of uncertainty,
Ere the full day of truth glares in upon him,
And points his rage.

PAMMENES.

Away: you must be known
To those few noble spirits who will die
To serve their prince; this secret place conceals
Some faithful friends, who may be still more useful,
Because unknown.

PYLADES.

Haste then; and if the tomb
Of thy dear father, if thy honored name
Joined to Electra's, if the wrath of heaven
Against usurpers, if the gracious gods
Who hither led thee, if they all should fail,
If this detested spot is doomed by fate
To be thy grave, O take a wretched life
To thee devoted, we will die together,

That comfort's left; for Pylades shall fall
Close by thy side, and worthy of Orestes.

ORESTES.

Strike me, kind heaven! but O for pity save
His matchless valor, and protect my friend!

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Perhaps the vigilance of good Pammenes
May for awhile remove the king's suspicions;
And gracious heaven, in pity to our woes,
Deceive Ægisthus to a fond belief,
That the devoted race of Tantalus
Is now no more; but, O my Pylades,
The sword I offered at my father's tomb
Is stolen by sacrilegious hands, that reach
Even to the sacred mansions of the dead:
If it be carried to the tyrant, all
Will be discovered; let us haste, my friend,
And seize him, ere it be too late.

PYLADES.

Pammenes
Is watchful o'er our interest; we must wait
For him: when we have gathered the few friends
That mean to serve us, be this tomb the place
Of meeting for us all, Pammenes then
Will join us here.

ORESTES.

O Pylades, O heaven!
This barbarous law that forces me to wound
A tender heart that lives but for Orestes!
And must I leave Electra to her sorrows?

PYLADES.

Yes: thou hast sworn it, therefore persevere;
Thou hast more cause to dread Electra now
Than all thy foes; she may destroy, but never
Can serve us, and the tyrant's eyes may soon
Be opened: O subdue, if possible,
The pangs of nature, and conceal thy love:
We came not here to comfort thy Electra,
But to avenge her.

ORESTES.

See, my Pylades,
She comes this way, perhaps in search of me.

PYLADES.

Her every step is watched: you must not see her:
Begone; and doubt not, I'll observe her well;
The eyes of friendship seldom are deceived.

SCENE II.

ELECTRA, IPHISA, PYLADES.

ELECTRA.

The villain hath escaped me; he avoids
My hated sight, and leaves me to my fate,
To fruitless rage, and unavailing tears,
Without the hope of vengeance: say, barbarian,
Thou vile accomplice in his crimes, where went

The murderer, my tyrant, my new lord,
(For so it seems Ægisthus has decreed)
Where is he gone?

PYLADES.

To do the will of heaven,
In dutiful obedience to the gods,
And well would it become the royal maid
To follow his example: fate ofttimes
Deceives the hearts of men, directs in secret,
And guides their wandering steps through paths unknown;
Ofttimes it sinks us in the deep abyss
Of misery, and then raises us to joy;
Binds us in chains, or lifts us to a thrône,
And gives us life midst horrors, tombs, and death.
Complain no more, but yield to thy new sorrows;
Be patient, and be happy: fare thee well.

SCENE III.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

ELECTRA.

He swells my rage to fury and despair:
Thinks he I'll tamely bear these cruel insults?
Could not a father's and a brother's death
Fill up the measure of Electra's woes;
But she must bend beneath the vile assassin
Of her Orestes; be a common slave
To all the murderers of her hapless race?
Thou dreadful sword, wet with Orestes' blood,
Exposed in triumph at the sacred tomb,
Thou execrable trophy, for a moment
Thou didst deceive me, but thou hast insulted
The ashes of the dead; I'll make thee serve

A nobler purpose: though Ægisthus hides
His guilty head, and with the queen in secret
Plans future crimes, and meditates destruction,
Still we may find the murderer of Orestes:
I cannot bathe me in the blood of both
My tyrants, but on one at least my soul
Shall be revenged.

IPHISA.

I cannot blame the grief
Which I partake; but hear me, hear the voice
Of reason; every tongue speaks of Orestes;
They say, he lives, and the king's fears confirm it.
You saw Pammenes talking with this stranger
In secret, saw his ardent zeal to serve
And to attend him: thinkest thou, our best friend,
Our comforter, the good old man, would e'er
Associate with a murderer? never, never,
He could not be so base.

ELECTRA.

He may be false,
Or weak; old age is easily deceived:
We are betrayed by all; I know we are:
Did not the cruel stranger boast his deed?
Did not Ægisthus yield me up a victim?
Was not Electra made the price of guilt,
The murderer's reward? Orestes calls me
To join him in the tomb: now then, my sister,
If e'er thou lovest Electra, pity her
In her last moments; bloody they must be,
And terrible. Away; inform thyself
Touching Pammenes; see if the assassin
Be with the queen: she flatters all my foes;
She heard unmoved the murder of her son,
And seemed, O gods! a mother seemed, to share

The guilty transport with her savage lord.
O that this sword could reach him in her arms,
And pierce the traitor's heart! I'll do it.

IPHISA.

No more:
Indeed you wrong her; for the sight of him
Offends her: be not thus precipitate
And rash, Electra; I will to Pammenes,
And talk with him: or I am much deceived,
Or by their silence they but mean to hide
Some mystery from us: your imprudent warmth
(Yet who would not forgive it in the wretched?)
Perhaps alarms them, and they would conceal
From you their purpose; what it is, I know not:
Pammenes seems to shun you, let me go
And speak to him; but do not, my Electra,
Hazard a deed thou wilt too late repent of.

SCENE IV.

ELECTRA.

The subtle tyrants have gained o'er Pammenes;
Old age is weak and fearful: what can faith
Or friendship do against the hand of power?
Henceforth Electra to herself alone
Shall trust her vengeance: 'tis enough: these hands,
Armed with despair, shall act with double vigor.
Arise ye furies, leave your dark abode
For seats more guilty, and another hell,
Open your dreary caverns, and receive
Your victims; bring your flaming torches here,
Daughters of vengeance, arm yourselves and me;
Approach, with death and terror in your train;

Orestes, Agamemnon, and Electra
Invoke your aid: and lo! they come, I see
Their glittering swords, and unappalled behold them;
They are not half so dreadful as Ægisthus:
The murderer comes; and see, they throng around him;
Hell points him out, and yields him to my vengeance.

SCENE V.

ELECTRA.

[*At the bottom of the stage.*

ORESTES.

[*On the other side at a distance from her.*

ORESTES.

Where am I? hither they directed me:
O my dear country! and thou, fatal spot
That gave me birth, thou great but guilty race
Of Tantalus, for ever shall thy blood
Be wretched? horror here on every side
Surrounds me: wherefore am I punished thus?
What have I done? why must Orestes suffer
For his forefathers' crimes?

ELECTRA.

[*Advancing a little from the bottom of the stage.*
What power withholds me?
I cannot lift my arm against him; but
I will go on.

ORESTES.

Methought I heard a voice:
O my dear father, ever-honored shade,
Much injured Agamemnon, didst thou groan?

ELECTRA.

Just heaven! durst he pronounce that sacred name?
And see he weeps: can sighs and penitence
Find entrance here? but what is his remorse
To the dire horrors that Electra feels!

[*She comes forward.*

He is alone; now strike—die, traitor—O
I cannot——

ORESTES.

Gods! Electra, art thou here,
Furious and trembling?

ELECTRA.

Sure thou art some god
Who thus unnervest me—thou has slain my brother:
I would have taken thy life for it, but the sword
Dropped from my hand; thy genius hath prevailed;
I yield to thee, and must betray my brother.

ORESTES.

Betray him, no! O, why am I restrained?——

ELECTRA.

At sight of thee my resolution dies,
And all is changed: could it be thou who filled
My soul with terror?

ORESTES.

O, I would repay
Thy precious tears with hazard of my life!

ELECTRA.

Methought I heard thee speak of Agamemnon.
O gentle youth, deceive me not, but speak:
For I had well nigh done a desperate deed;
O show me all the guilt of it! explain
The mystery; tell me who thou art.

ORESTES.

O sister
Of dear Orestes, fly from me, avoid me.

ELECTRA.

But wherefore? speak.

ORESTES.

No more—I am—take heed
They see us not together.

ELECTRA.

Gracious heaven!
Thou fillest my heart with terror and with joy.

ORESTES.

O if thou lovest thy brother——

ELECTRA.

Love him! yes:
And O in thee I hear a father's voice,
And see his features; nature hath unveiled
The mystery: O be kind and speak for her,
Do not deny it; say thou art my brother:
Thou art, I know thou art—my dear Orestes;
How could a sister seek thy precious life?

ORESTES.

[*Embracing her.*
Heaven threatens in vain, and nature will prevail:
Electra is more powerful than the gods.

ELECTRA.

The gods have given a sister to thy vows,
And dost thou fear their wrath?

ORESTES.

Their cruel orders
Would have deprived me of my dear Electra,
And may perhaps chastise a brother's weakness.

ELECTRA.

Thy weakness there was virtue; O rejoice
With me, Orestes; wherefore wouldst thou force me
To that rash act? it might have cost thee dear.

ORESTES.

I've broken my sacred promise.

ELECTRA.

'Twas thy duty.

ORESTES.

A secret trusted to me by the gods.

ELECTRA.

I drew it from thee; I extorted it;
Mine be the guilt; an oath more sacred far
Binds me to vengeance: what hast thou to fear?

ORESTES.

My destiny, the oracles, the blood
From whence I sprung.

ELECTRA.

That blood henceforth shall flow
In purer streams; haste then, and join with me
To scourge the guilty; oracles and gods
Are all propitious to our great design,
And the same power that saved will guide Orestes.

SCENE VI.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

ELECTRA.

Rejoice with me, my friends, for I have found
My dear Orestes.

PYLADES.

[*To Orestes.*

Hast thou then revealed
The dangerous secret? Couldst thou think—

ORESTES.

If heaven
Expects obedience, it must give us laws
We can obey.

ELECTRA.

Canst thou reproach him thus
Only for making poor Electra happy?
Wouldst thou adopt the cruel sentiments
Of persecuting foes, and hide Orestes
From my embraces? what unjust decree
What harsh commands—

PYLADES.

I meant to save him for thee,
That he might live, and be thy great avenger.

PAMMENES.

Princess, thou knowest, in this detested place
They watch thee nearly; every sigh is heard,
And every motion carefully observed:
Those private friends, whose humble state eludes
The tyrants search, adore this noble youth,

And would have served him; everything's prepared;
But thy imprudence now will hazard all.

ELECTRA.

Did not Ægisthus give me to a hand,
Stained, as he thought, with my Orestes' blood?
[*To Orestes.*
Thou art my master; I am bound to serve thee;
I will obey the tyrant; his commands,
For once, are welcome, and the prospect brightens
On every side.

PAMMENES.

It may be clouded soon,
Ægisthus is alarmed, and we have cause
To tremble; if he but suspects us, death
Must be our portion, therefore let us part.

PYLADES.

[*To Pammenes.*
Hence, good Pammenes, bring our friends together,
The hours are precious; haste and finish soon
Thy noble work; 'tis time we should appear,
And—like ourselves.

SCENE VII.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, *Guards.*

ÆGISTHUS.

Slaves, execute your office,
And bear these traitors to the dungeon.

ORESTES.

Once
There ruled o'er Argos those who better knew
The rights of hospitality.

PYLADES.

Ægisthus,
What is our crime? Inform us, and at least
Respect this noble youth.

ÆGISTHUS.

Away with them;
Ye stand aghast, as if ye feared to touch
His sacred person: hence, I say, take heed
Ye disobey me not: guards, drag them off.

ELECTRA.

O stay, barbarian, stay; for heaven itself
Pleads for their sacred lives—they tear them from me,
O gods!

ÆGISTHUS.

Electra, tremble for thyself,
Perfidious as thou art, and dread my wrath.

SCENE VIII.

ELECTRA, CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

ELECTRA.

O hear me, if thou art a mother, hear;
Let me recall thy former tenderness,
Forgive my guilty rage, the sad effect
Of unexampled sorrows; to complain,
Is still, the mournful privilege of grief:
Pity these wretched strangers; heaven perhaps,

Whose dreadful vengeance thou so long hast feared,
May for their sakes forgive thy past offences;
The pardon thou bestowest on them may plead
For thee: O save them, save them.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Why shouldst thou
Be thus solicitous? What interest prompts
Thy ardent zeal?

ELECTRA.

Thou seest, the gods protect them,
Who saved them from the Ocean's boisterous rage,
And brought them here: heaven gives them to thy care,
And will require them at thy hands—to one,
O if thou knewest him—but they both are wretched.
Are we in Argos, or at Tauris, where
The cruel priestess bids her altars smoke
With stranger's blood? What must I do to save him?
Command, and I obey: to Plisthenes
You'd have me wedded; I submit, though death
Were far more welcome; lead me to his bed.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

You mean to mock us: knowest thou not, he's dead?

ELECTRA.

Just heaven! and hath Ægisthus lost a son?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

I see the joy that sparkles in thy eyes;
Thou art pleased to hear it.

ELECTRA.

No: I am too wretched
To be delighted with another's woe:
I pity the unhappy, nor would shed

To speak or to be silent; strives to soothe
The tyrant's rage, and save them from his vengeance:
But should Orestes once be known, he dies.

ELECTRA.

O cruel thought! perhaps when I implored
My barbarous mother I destroyed Orestes;
Her grief will but enrage the fierce Ægisthus;
Nature is ever fatal here: I dread
Her silence, and yet would not have her speak;
Danger is on every side: but say, Iphisa,
What hath Pammenes done?

IPHISA.

His feeble age
Seems strengthened by misfortune, and our dangers
But breathe new spirit o'er his ardent zeal
To serve our cause; he animates our friends
With double vigor; even the servile throng,
That cringe around the tyrant's throne, begin
To murmur at the name of great Orestes:
Veterans, who served beneath the father, burn
With honest ardor to support the son:
Such power have justice and the sacred laws
O'er mortal minds, howe'er by vice corrupted.

ELECTRA.

O that Electra could inflame their souls
With glowing virtue, breathe her own fierce spirit
Into their timid hearts, and animate
Their cold resentment! would I had but known,
Ere he arrived on this detested shore,
That my Orestes lived! or that Pammenes
Had further urged———

SCENE III.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, IPHISA, *Guards.*

ÆGISTHUS.

Guards, seize that hoary traitor,
And let him be confronted with those strangers
Whom I have doomed to death; he is their friend,
And confidant, the accomplice in their crimes:
How dreadful was the snare which they had laid!
O, Clytemnæstra, 'tis the cursed Orestes,
It must be he; do not deceive thyself,
Do not defend him: O, I see it all,
It is too plain: alas! this urn contains
The ashes of my son: the murderers brought
This fatal present to his weeping father.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA

Canst thou believe———

ÆGISTHUS.

I can; I must rely
On the sworn hatred 'twixt the unhappy children
Of Atreus and Thyestes; must believe
The time, the place, the rage of fierce Electra,
Iphisa's tears, your undeserved compassion,
Your ill-timed pity for these base assassins;
Orestes lives, and I have lost my son;
But I have caught him in the toils; whiche'er
It be, for yet I know not, I'll be just,
I'll sacrifice the murderer to my son,
And to his mother.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Horrid sacrifice!
I must not see it.

ÆGISTHUS.

Horrible to thee?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

O yes; already blood enough hath flowed
In this sad scene of slaughter: O 'tis time
To end the woes of Pelops' hapless race:
If after all it should not be Orestes,
Wouldst thou, on dark suspicion's vague report,
Murder the innocent? and if it be
Indeed my son, my lord, I must defend him,
Must gain his pardon at thy hands, or perish.

ÆGISTHUS.

I cannot, dare not yield to thy request;
For thy own sake I dare not; thy fond pity
May be thy ruin; all that melts thy heart
To soft compassion, sharpens mine to rage
And fierce resentment: one of them I know
Must be Orestes, therefore both shall die;
I ought not even to hesitate a moment:
Guards, do your office.

IPHISA.

O, my lord, behold me
Low at your feet; must all our hapless race
Thus humbly bend, thus supplicate in vain?
Electra, kneel with me, embrace his knees,
Thy pride destroys us.

ELECTRA.

Can I stoop so low?
Shall I bring foul disgrace on thee, my brother,

And ignominy, and shame? it shocks my soul;
But I will suffer all to save Orestes.

[*Turning to Ægisthus.*

It thou wilt save him, here I promise thee,
(Not to forget my father's murder, that
I never can, but) in respectful silence
To pay thee homage, still to live with thee
A willing slave, let but my brother live.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thy brother dies, and thou shalt live a slave;
My vengeance is complete: thy pride is humbled,
And sues in vain.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Ægisthus, 'tis too much,
To trample thus on the unhappy race
Of him who was thy master once; away,
Spite of thy rage, I will defend my son;
Deaf as thou art to a fond sister's prayers,
A mother's may prevail: O think, my lord,
Think on thy happy state, above the reach
Of adverse fortune no, Orestes ne'er
Can hurt thee, and Electra bends submissive
Beneath thy power, Iphisa at thy feet;
Can nothing move thee? I have gone too far
Already with thee in the paths of guilt,
And offered up a dreadful sacrifice.
Thinkest thou I'll yield thee up my purest blood
To glut thy rage? Am I forever doomed
To take a murderous husband to my arms?
At Aulis one a lovely daughter slew,
The other threatens to destroy my son
Before my eyes, close to his father's tomb:
O rather let this fatal diadem,
Hateful to Greece, and to myself a load

Of misery, fall with me, and be no more
Remembered! O Ægisthus, well thou knowest,
I loved thee, 'tis amongst my blackest crimes,
And stands the foremost; but I love my children,
And will defend them; against thy arm upraised
To shed their blood will lift my vengeful hand,
And blast thy purpose: tremble, for thou knowest me:
The bands are sacred that united us,
Thy interest is most dear to Clytemnæstra:
Remember still, Orestes is my son,
And fear his mother.

ELECTRA.

You surpass my hopes.
Surely a heart like thine could ne'er be guilty;
Go on, my honored mother, and avenge
Your children, and your husband.

ÆGISTHUS.

Slave, thou fillest
The measure of thy crimes: gods! shall Ægisthus
Withhold his vengeance for a woman's cries,
For Agamemnon's widow, and her children?
Unhappy queen! say, whom dost thou accuse?
Whom dost thou plead for? hear me and obey.
Away with them to instant death.

SCENE IV.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, IPHISA, DYMAS.

DYMAS.

My lord?

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou seemest disordered: what has happened?
Speak.

DYMAS.

Orestes is discovered.

IPHISA.

Ha! where is he?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

My son!

ELECTRA.

My brother?

ÆGISTHUS.

Have you punished him
As he deserves?

DYMAS.

My lord, as yet he lives.

ÆGISTHUS.

And wherefore were my orders disobeyed?

DYMAS.

His friend and fellow-captive, Pylades,
Pointed him out, and to the soldiers showed
Great Agamemnon's son; they seemed much moved;
I dread the consequence.

ÆGISTHUS.

I must prevent it,
For they shall die: who dares not to revenge me
Shall feel my justice: Dymas, follow me:
Stay thou and guard his sisters; I defy
The blood of Agamemnon: from the father
Of Plisthenes, and great Thyestes' son,
What mortal, or what god, shall save Orestes?

SCENE V.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, IPHISA.

IPHISA.

Fear not, but follow him; Electra, speak,
Exhort our friends, and animate their zeal.

ELECTRA.

[*To Clytemnæstra.*

O, in the name of powerful nature, now
Complete thy noble work; conduct us, fly——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

You must not hence, the guards will not permit it:
Stay here, my children, and rely on me,
On a fond mother, and a tender wife:
I will perform the double task, and take
Orestes and Ægisthus to my care.

SCENE VI.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

IPHISA.

Alas! the avenging god pursues us still;
Though she defends Orestes, still Ægisthus
Is at her heart; perhaps the tender cries
Of pity and remorse shall naught avail
Against the tyrant; he is proud, revengeful,
Implacable, and furious; who shall save
If he condemns? we must submit, and die.

ELECTRA.

O that before my death I had not fallen
So low as to entreat him, to belie
My honest heart, and supplicate the tyrant!
Despair and horror sink me to the tomb
With infamy and shame; my vain endeavors
To save Orestes but urge on his fate.
Where are these boasted friends Pammenes talked of,
Who, with fell rancor, and determined hate,
Pursued Ægisthus? Where those vengeful gods
Who hid Orestes from my sight, upraised
His righteous arm, and promised to support him?
Where are ye now, infernal goddesses,
Daughters of night, ye who so lately shook
Your dreadful torches here? all nature once
United seemed to guard and to protect us,
But all desert us now, all court Ægisthus,
And men and gods, and heaven and hell betray me.

SCENE VII.

ELECTRA, PYLADES, IPHISA.

ELECTRA.

What sayest thou, Pylades? the deed is done?

PYLADES.

It is: Electra's free, and heaven obeyed.

ELECTRA.

How?

PYLADES.

Yes, Orestes reigns: he sent me hither.

IPHISA.

Just gods!

ELECTRA.

Orestes! is it possible!
I faint, I die with joy.

PYLADES.

Orestes lives,
And has avenged the blood of innocence.

ELECTRA.

What wondrous power hath wrought this strange event.

PYLADES.

His father's name, Electra's, and his own;
His valor, and his virtue; our misfortunes,
Justice, and pity; and the power that pleads
In human hearts for wretchedness like thine.
Pammenes, by the tyrant's order bound,
Was led with us to death; in weeping crowds
The people followed, and deplored our fate:
I saw their rage was equal to their fears,
But the guards watched them closely: then Orestes
Cried, "Strike, ye slaves, and sacrifice the last
Of Argos' kings; ye dare not." When he spoke,
On his fair front such native majesty
And royal lustre shone, we almost thought
Great Agamemnon's spirit from the tomb
Had risen, and came once more to bless mankind.
I spoke, and friendship's happy voice prevailed;
The people rose, the soldiers stood aghast,
And dropped the uplifted falchions from their hands;
The crowd encircled us, and desperate love,
With friendship joined, fought nobly for Orestes;

The joyful people bore him off in triumph:
Ægisthus flew to seize his destined prey,
And in the slave he meant to punish, found
A conqueror: pleased I saw his humbled pride;
His friends deserted, and his guards betrayed him:
The insulting people triumphed in his fall.
O glorious day! O all discerning justice!
Ægisthus wears the chains that bound Orestes;
The queen alone attends, protects, and saves him
From the mad crowd, that press tumultuous on,
Big with revenge, and thirsting for his blood;
While Clytemnæstra holds him in her arms,
And shields him from their rage, implores Orestes
To save her husband: he respects her still,
Fulfils the duties of a son and brother:
Safe from the foe you will behold him soon
Triumphant here, a conqueror and a king.

IPHISA.

Let us away, to greet the loved Orestes,
And comfort our afflicted mother.

ELECTRA.

Gods!
What unexpected bliss! O Pylades,
Thou best of friends, thou kind protector, haste,
Let us begone.

PYLADES.

[*To his attendants.*

Take off those shameful bonds;

[*They take off her chains.*

Fall from her hands, ye chains, for they were made
To wield a sceptre.

SCENE VIII.

ELECTRA, IPHISA, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

ELECTRA.

O Pammenes, where,
Where is my Orestes, my deliverer?
Why comes he not?

PAMMENES.

This is a dreadful moment,
And full of terror, for his father's spirit
Demands a sacrifice, and justice waits
To pay it, so hath heaven decreed: this tomb
Must be the altar where the victim's blood
Shall soon be shed; that sacred duty done,
He will attend thee; but thou must not see
A sight so terrible: thou knowest the laws
Of Argos suffer not thy spotless hands
To join with her ere the appointed time.

IPHISA.

But say, Pammenes, what of Clytemnæstra,
How acts she in this dreadful crisis?

PAMMENES.

Vainly
She deprecates the wrath of fierce Orestes,
And strives to save Ægisthus; kneels for pardon,
And craves that boon she never will obtain:
Meantime the furies, deaf to her entreaties,
And thirsting for the cruel murderer's blood,
Throng round Orestes, and demand his life.

IPHISA.

O may this day of terror be a day
Of pardon and forgiveness; may it finish
The cruel woes of our unhappy race!
Hark, Pylades, Electra, heard ye not
A dreadful groan?

ELECTRA.

My mother's sure.

PAMMENES.

'Tis she.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

[*Behind the scenes.*

O spare me!

IPHISA.

Heaven!

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

[*Behind the scenes.*

My son!

ELECTRA.

He kills Ægisthus.
O hear her not, Orestes, but go on,
Revenge, revenge, dissolve the horrid tie,
And sacrifice the murderer in her arms:
Strike deep.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

My son! O, thou hast slain thy mother.

PYLADES.

O cruel fate!

IPHISA.

O guilt!

ELECTRA.

O wretched brother!
Crimes punish crimes; forever be this day
Lamented by us!

SCENE IX.

ORESTES.

[*Enters.*

Open wide, thou earth,
And swallow me: O Clytemnæstra, Atreus,
And Tantalus, I come, I follow you
To Erebus, a partner in your crimes,
To share your tortures.

ELECTRA.

O what hast thou done?

ORESTES.

She strove to save him, and I smote them both——
I can no more———

ELECTRA.

She fell then by thy hand!
O dreadful stroke! and couldst thou———

ORESTES.

'Twas not I;
'Twas not Orestes; some malignant power
Guided my hand, the hateful instrument
Of heaven's eternal wrath: Orestes lives
But to be wretched; banished from my country,
When my dear father fell, my mother slain,
And by my hand; an exile from the world,
Bereft of parents, country, fortune, friends,

Now must I wander: all is lost to me:
O thou bright orb, thou ever glorious sun,
Shocked at our crimes, and Atreus's horrid feast,
Thou didst withdraw thy beams, and yet thou shinest
On me! O wherefore in eternal night
Dost thou not bury all? O tyrant gods,
Merciless powers, who punished me for guilt
Yourselves commanded, O for what new crime
Am I reserved? speak—ye pronounce the name
Of Tauris, there I'll seek the murderous priestess,
Who offers blood alone to the angry gods,
To gods less cruel, less unjust than you.

ELECTRA.

Stay, and conjure their justice and their hate.

PYLADES.

Where'er the gods may lead, thy Pylades
Shall follow still, and friendship triumph o'er
The woes of mortals, and the wrath of heaven.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

SÉMIRAMIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Sémiramis.
Arsaces, or Ninias.
Azema, a Princess of the Family of Belus.
Assur, a Prince of the Family of Belus.
Oroes, High Priest.
Otanes, a Favorite of Semiramis.
Mitranes, Friend of Arsaces.
Cedar, Friend of Assur.
Guards, Magi, Slaves, Attendants.

This was produced in 1748 and a burlesque upon it was played at Fontainebleau.

SÉMIRAMIS.

ACT I.

The scene represents a large peristyle, at the bottom of which is the palace of Sémiramis. Gardens with fine hanging terraces, raised above the palace: on the right hand the temple of the magi, and on the left a mausoleum adorned with obelisks.

SCENE I.

ARSACES, MITRANES.

[*Two slaves at a distance carrying a coffer.*

ARSACES.

Once more, Mitranes, thou beholdest thy friend,
Who, in obedience to the royal mandate
In secret sent, revisits Babylon,
The seat of empire; how Sémiramis
Imprints the image of her own great soul
On every object! these stupendous piles,
These deep enclosures, where Euphrates pours
His tributary waves; the temple's pride,
The hanging gardens, and the splendid tomb
Of Ninus, wondrous monuments of art!
And only less to be admired than she
Who raised them! here, in all her splendid pomp,
More honored than the monarchs of the East,
Arsaces shall behold this glorious queen.

MITRANES.

O my Arsaces, credit not the voice
Of Fame, she is deceitful oft, and vain;

Perhaps hereafter thou mayest weep with me,
And admiration on a nearer view
May turn to pity.

ARSACES.

Wherefore?

MITRANES.

Sunk in grief,
Sémiramis hath spread o'er every heart
The sorrows which she feels; sometimes she raves,
Filling the air with her distressful cries,
As if some vengeful God pursued her; sits
Silent and sad within these lonely vaults,
Sacred to night, to sorrow, and to death,
Which mortals dare not enter; where the ashes
Of Ninus, our late honored sovereign, lie:
There will she oft fall on her knees and weep:
With slow and fearful steps she glides along,
And beats her breast besprinkled with her tears:
Oft as she treads her solitary round,
Will she repeat the names of son and husband,
And call on heaven, which in its anger seems
To thwart her in the zenith of her glory.

ARSACES.

Whence can her sorrow flow?

MITRANES.

The effect is dreadful;
The cause unknown.

ARSACES.

How long hath she been thus
Oppressed, Mitranes?

MITRANES.

From the very time
When first her orders came to bring Arsaces.

ARSACES.

Me, saidst thou?

MITRANES.

You, my lord: when Babylon
Rejoicing met to celebrate thy conquests,
And saw the banners thy victorious arm
Had wrested from our vanquished foes; when first
Euphrates brought to our delighted shore
The lovely Azema, from Belus sprung,
Whom thou hadst saved from Scythian ravishers,
Even in that hour of triumph and success,
Even in the bosom of prosperity,
The heart of majesty was pierced with grief,
And the throne lost its lustre.

ARSACES.

Azema
Was not to blame; she could not be the cause
Of sorrow or distress; one look from her
Would soothe the wrath of gods: but say, my friend,
Sémiramis is still a sovereign here,
Her heart is not forever sunk in grief?

MITRANES.

No: when her noble mind shakes off the burden,
Resumes its strength, and shines in native lustre,
Then we behold in her exalted soul
Powers that excel whatever flattery's self
Hath e'er bestowed on kings; but when she sinks
Beneath this dreadful malady, loose flow
The reins of empire, dropping from her hand;
Then the proud satrap, fiery Assur, guides

The helm and makes the nations groan beneath him:
The fatal secret never yet hath reached
The walls of Babylon: abroad we still
Are envied, but, alas! we mourn at home.

ARSACES.

What lessons of instruction to weak mortals,
When happiness is mingled thus with woe!
I, too, am wretched, thus deprived of him
Whose piercing wisdom best could give me council,
And lead me through the mazes of a court.
O I have cause to weep: without a father,
Left as I am to all the dangerous passions
Of heedless youth, without a friendly guide,
What rocks encompass and what shoals affright me!

MITRANES.

I weep with thee the loss of him we loved,
The good old man; Phradates was my friend;
Ninus esteemed and gave to him the care
Of Ninias, his dear son, our country's hope:
But O! one fatal day destroyed them both,
Father and son: to voluntary exile
Devoted, long he lived: his banishment
Was fortunate to thee, and made thee great:
Close by his side, in honor's glorious field,
Arsaces fought, and conquered for his country:
Now, ranked with princes, thy exalted virtue
Claims its reward by merit all thy own.

ARSACES.

I know not what may be my portion here:
Perhaps, distinguished on Arbazan's plains
With fair success, my name is not unknown:
On Oxus' banks to great Sémiramis,
When vanquished nations paid the homage due,

From her triumphant cars she dropped a ray
Of her own glory on Arsaces' head:
But oft the soldier, honored in the field,
In courts neglected lies, and is forgotten.
My father told me in his dying hour
The fortune of Arsaces here depended
Upon the common cause; then gave to me
These precious relics, which from every eye
He had preserved: I must deliver them
To the high priest, for he alone can judge,
And know their value: I must talk with him
In secret, touching my own fate, for he
Can best conduct me to Sémiramis.

MITRANES.

He seldom sees the queen: in solitude
Obscure he lives: his holy ministry
Engrosses all his care; without ambition,
Fearless, and void of art: is always seen
Within the temple, never at the court:
Never affects the pride of rank and title,
Nor his tiara near the diadem
Immodest wears: the less he seeks for greatness,
The more is he admired, the more revered:
I have access to every avenue
Of his retirement in this sacred place,
And can this moment talk to him in secret;
Ere day's too far advanced I'll bring him hither.

SCENE II.

ARSACES.

[*Alone.*

Immortal gods! for what am I reserved?
Make known your will: why did my dying father

Thus send me to the sanctuary, me
A soldier, bred amidst the din of arms?
A lover, too? How can Arsaces serve
The gods of the Chaldæans?—Ha! what voice
From yonder tomb in plaintive accents strikes
My frighted ear, and makes my hair to stand
On end with horror! Near this place I've heard
The spirit of Ninus dwells—again it shrieks—
It shocks my soul—Ye dark and dreary caves,
And thou, the shade of my illustrious master,
Thou voice of heaven, what wouldst thou with Arsaces?

SCENE III.

ARSACES, OROES, *the high priest, the magi attending him,* MITRANES.

MITRANES.

[*Speaking to Oroes.*

He's here, my lord, and waits to give you up
Those precious relics.

ARSACES.

Most revered father,
Permit a soldier to approach your presence,
Pleased to fulfil a father's last command,
One whom you deigned to love; thus at your feet,
Obedient to his will, I here resign them.

OROES.

Welcome! thou brave and noble youth! that God
Who governs all, and not a father's will,
Guided thee here: Phradates was my friend;

Dear is his memory to me; thou shalt know
Perhaps hereafter how I love his son:
Where are the gifts he sent me?

ARSACES.

[*The slaves deliver the coffer to two of the magi, who place it on an altar.*

Here, my lord.

OROES.

[*Opening the coffer, bowing reverentially to it, and seeming greatly affected.*

Ye sacred relics! do these eyes at length
Behold you! O, I weep for joy to press
These monuments of woe, whilst tears recall
My solemn oath: Mitranes, let no ear
Profane disturb our holy mystery:
We would be private.

[*The magi retire.*

Mark this seal, Arsaces:
'Tis that which to the laws of Ninus gave
Their public force, and kept the world in awe:
The letter, too, which with his dying hand
He wrote: Arsaces, view the wreath that crowned
His royal brows, and his victorious sword:
The vanquished Medes and Persians felt its power;
It comes at last to vindicate its master,
And to revenge him; useless instrument
Against base treachery, and destructive poison,
Whose mortal—

ARSACES.

Heaven! what sayest thou?

OROES.

The dread secret
Hath long been hid in darkness from the eyes

Of men within the sepulchre; the shade
Of Ninus, and offended heaven, long time
Have raised their voice in vain, and called for vengeance.

ARSACES.

It must be as thou sayest: for know, but now,
Even on this spot, I heard most dreadful groans.

OROES.

It was the voice of Ninus.

ARSACES.

Twice the noise
Affrighted me.

OROES.

'Twas he: he calls for vengeance.

ARSACES.

He has a right to ask it: but on whom?

OROES.

On the vile murderers, whose detested hands
Had of the best of sovereigns robbed mankind;
No tracks are left behind of the base treason,
But all with him lies buried in the tomb:
With ease might they deceive the sons of men,
But not the all-seeing eye of watchful heaven,
Which pierces the deep night of human falsehood.

ARSACES.

O would to heaven this feeble hand had power
To punish crimes like these! I know not wherefore,
But when I cast my eyes towards yon tomb,
New horrors rise: O might I not consult
That venerable shade, the inhabitant
Of those dark mansions?

OROES.

No; it is forbidden:
An oracle severe long since denounced
The wrath of heaven against whoe'er should press
Into this vale of tears, inhabited
By death and the avenging gods: await
With me, Arsaces, for the day of justice:
Soon will it come, and all shall be accomplished:
I can no more: sequestered from the world,
I pray in secret to offended heaven,
Which, as it wills, commissions me to speak,
Or close my lips in silence: I have said
All that I dare, and all I ought: be careful
Lest in these walls a word, or look, or gesture,
Betray the secret which the god by me
Hath trusted with thee; for on that depends
His glory, Asia's welfare, and thy life.
Approach, ye magi, hide these sacred relics
Beneath the altar.

[*The great gate of the palace opens, Assur appears at a distance, surrounded by attendants and guards on every side.*

Ha! the palace opens:
The courtiers crowding to the queen: behold
The haughty Assur with his servile throng
Of flatterers round him! O almighty power!
On whom dost thou bestow thy bounties here?
O monster!

ARSACES.

Ha! what meanest thou?

OROES.

Fare thee well:
When night shall cast her sable mantle o'er

These guilty walls, I'll have more converse with thee,
Before the gods: revere them, my Arsaces,
For know, brave youth, their eyes are fixed on thee.

SCENE IV.

ARSACES, MITRANES, *in the front of the stage,* ASSUR, CEDAR, *with attendants, on one side.*

ARSACES.

His words are dreadful; they affright my soul:
What horrid crimes! and what a court is here!
How little known! my royal master poisoned,
And Assur, but too well I see, suspected!

MITRANES.

Assur is sprung of royal race, and claims
The deference due to his authority:
He is the favorite of Sémiramis,
And thou, without a blush, mayest pay him homage.

ARSACES.

Homage to him!

ASSUR.

[*To Cedar.*

Ha! do my eyes deceive me,
Or is Arsaces here without my order?
Amazing insolence!

ARSACES.

What haughtiness!

ASSUR.

[*Advancing.*

Come hither, youth: what new engagements here
Have brought you from the camp?

ARSACES.

My duty, sir,
And the queen's orders.

ASSUR.

Did the queen send for you?

ARSACES.

She did.

ASSUR.

But, know you not, with her commands
You should have asked for mine?

ARSACES.

I know not that,
And should have thought the honor of her crown
Debased by such a mean submission to thee:
My lord, you must forgive a soldier's roughness,
We are bad courtiers: bred up in the plains
Of Arbazan and Scythia, I have served
Your court, but am not much acquainted with it.

ASSUR.

Age, time, and place, perhaps, may teach you, sir.
What would you with the queen? for know, young man,
Assur alone can lead you to her presence.

ARSACES.

I come to ask my valor's best reward,
The honor still to serve her.

ASSUR.

Thou wantest more,
Presumptuous boy! I know thy bold pretences
To Azema, but that thou wouldst conceal.

ARSACES.

Yes: I adore that lovely maid: her heart
Would I prefer to empire: my respect,
My tenderest love—

ASSUR.

No more: thou knowest not whom
Thou art insulting thus: what! join the race
Of a Sarmatian to the demigods
Of Tigris and Euphrates! mark me well:
In pity to thy youth I would advise thee
Ne'er, on thy peril, to Sémiramis
Impart thy insolent request; for know,
Rash boy, if thou shouldst dare to violate
The rights of Assur, 'twill not pass unpunished.

ARSACES.

I'll go this instant: thou hast given me courage:
Thus threatenings always terrify Arsaces:
Thou hast no right, whate'er thy power may be,
To affront a soldier who has served his queen,
The state, and thee: perhaps my warmth offends;
But thou art rasher than myself, to think
That I would bend beneath thy servile yoke,
Or tremble at thy power.

ASSUR.

Perhaps thou mayest;
I'll teach thee what a subject may expect
For insolence like this.

ARSACES.

We both may learn it.

SCENE V.

SÉMIRAMIS, *at the farther end of the stage, leaning on her women.*

OTANES, ASSUR, ARSACES, MITRANES, *in the front.*

OTANES.

[*Advancing.*

My lord, the queen at present would be private:
You must retire, and give her sorrows way:
Withdraw, ye gods, the hand of vengeance from her!

ARSACES.

How I lament her fate!

ASSUR.

[*To one of his attendants.*

Let us begone,
And study how we best may turn her griefs
To our advantage.

[*Sémiramis comes forward, and is joined by Otanes.*

OTANES.

My royal mistress, be yourself again,
And wake once more to joy and happiness.

SÉMIRAMIS.

O death! when wilt thou come with friendly shade
To close these eyes that hate the light of day?
Be shut, ye caves; horrible phantom, hence!
Strike if thou wilt, but threaten me no more.
Otanes, is Arsaces come?

OTANES.

Ere morn
Rose on the temple, madam, he was there.

SÉMIRAMIS.

That dreadful voice, from heaven or hell I know not,
Which in the dead of night so shakes my soul,
Told me, my sorrows, when Arsaces came,
Would soon be o'er.

OTANES.

Rely then on the gods,
And let the cheerful ray of hope dispel
This melancholy.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Is Arsaces here?
Methinks, when I but hear his name, my soul
Is less disturbed, and guilt sits lighter on me!

OTANES.

O! quit, forever quit the sad remembrance:
Let the bright days of great Sémiramis,
Replete with glory, blot one moment out
That broke the chain of thy ill-fated nuptials:
Had Ninus driven thee from his throne and bed,
All Babylon with thee had been destroyed;
But happily for us, and for mankind,
That wanted such distinguished virtues, you
Prevented him; and fifteen years of toil,
Spent in the service of thy country, lands
Desert and waste made fertile by thy care,
The savage tamed, and yielding to the laws,
The useful arts, obedient to thy voice,
Uprising still, the glorious monuments
Of wealth and power, the wonder of mankind,

And the loud plaudit of a grateful people,
All plead thy cause before the throne of heaven;
But if impartial justice hold the scale,
If vengeance is required for Ninus' death,
Why thus should Assur brave the angry gods,
And live in peace? He was more guilty far
Than thou wert, yet the ruthless hand that poured
The fatal draught never shakes with fear: he feels
No stings of conscience, no remorse affrights him.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Our duties different, different is our fate:
Where ties are sacred, crimes are heavier far:
I was his wife, Otanes, and I stand
Without excuse; my conscience is my judge
And my accuser: but I hoped the gods,
Offended at my crimes, had punished me
Enough, when they deprived me of my child;
Hoped my successful toils, that made the earth
Respect my name, had soothed the wrath of heaven:
But months on months have passed in agony
Since this dire spectre hath appalled my soul:
My eyes forever see him, and my ears
Still hear his cries: I get me to the tomb,
But dare not enter: trembling I revere
His ashes, and invoke his honored shade,
Which only answers me in dismal groans.
Some dread event is nigh: perhaps the time
Is come to expiate the offence.

OTANES.

But thinkest thou
The spirit of thy lord hath left indeed
The mansions of the dead, and stalks abroad?
Ofttimes the soul, by powerful fancy led,

Starts at a phantom of its own creation;
Still it beholds the objects it has made,
And everything we fear is present to us.

SÉMIRAMIS.

O no! it was not the wild dream of fancy
By slumber wrought, I saw him but too well:
The stranger, Sleep, had long withheld from me
His sweet delusions; watchful as I stood,
And mused on my unhappy fate, a voice
Close to my bed, methought, cried out, "Arsaces!"
The name revived me: well thou knowest, long time
Assur has pierced this heart with deadly grief:
I shudder at his presence, and the blushes
That show my guilt increase my punishment,
Hate the reproachful witness of my shame,
And wish I could—but wherefore should I add
To crimes like mine fresh guilt? I sought Arsaces
To punish Assur, and the thought of him
Awhile relieved me! but in the sweet moment
Of consolation, sudden stood before me
That minister of death, all bathed in blood,
And in his hand a falchion: still I see,
Still hear him: comes he to defend, or punish?
'Twas at that very hour Arsaces came.
This day was fixed by heaven to end my sorrows,
But peace is yet a stranger to my soul,
And hope is lost in horror and despair:
The load of life is grown too heavy for me,
My throne is hateful, and my glories past
But add fresh weight to my calamities.
Long time I've hid my sorrows from the world
And blushed in secret, fearful to consult
That reverend sage whom Babylon adores:
I would not thus degrade the majesty

Of sovereign power, or let Sémiramis
Betray her fears before a mortal's eye,
But I have sent to Libya's sands in secret
There to consult the oracle of Jove:
As if removed from man, the God of truth
Had hid in desert plains his will divine.
Alas! Otanes, that dread power which dwells
Within these lonely walls, hath long received
My fears and adorations; at his altars
My gifts were offered, and my incense rose;
But gifts and incense never can atone
For crimes like mine: to-day I shall receive
Answers from Memphis.

SCENE VI.

SÉMIRAMIS, OTANES, MITRANES.

MITRANES.

An Egyptian priest
Is at the palace gate, and begs admittance.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Then will my woes be ended, or complete.
Let us begone, and hide from Babylon
Her queen's disgraceful sorrows: let Arsaces
Be sent to me: soon may his presence calm
This storm of grief, and soothe my troubled soul!

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

ARSACES, AZEMA.

AZEMA.

To thee, Arsaces, this great empire owes
Its lustre, I my liberty and life.
When vanquished Scythia, thirsting for revenge,
From its wild desert rushed indignant forth,
And bore down all before it; when my father,
Oppressed by numbers, fell, and left me there
A hapless slave; then, armed with thunder, thou,
Piercing their dark retreats, didst break my chains,
And give me ample vengeance on my foes.
Thou wert my great deliverer, Arsaces,
And in return I give thee all my heart;
I will be thine, and only thine; but O!
Our fatal passion will destroy us both:
Thy generous heart, too open and sincere,
Believed that gallant deeds, and fair renown
In arms, would gain thee honors in a court;
And, fearless of success, thou bringest with thee
A hero's fierceness and a lover's heart.
Assur is incensed: alas! thou dost not know him:
He is too powerful for us; he rules all
At Babylon; and much, I fear, abuses
His fatal influence o'er Sémiramis:
He is thy great inexorable—rival.

ARSACES.

Ha! does he love thee?

AZEMA.

No; that savage mind,
Subtle and dark, a foe to every virtue,

Insensible to love and every charm
But those ambition boasts, could never feel
A real passion for me: but he knows
That Azema is descended from the race
Of our Assyrian kings, and soon may claim
My right of empire here, as next the throne;
And therefore means to blend his interest here
With mine, and gain the sceptre for himself:
But if the youth whom Ninus had decreed,
Even from my infant years, to be my husband,
The son of great Sémiramis, and heir
Of Babylon, were living now, and here
Would offer me his heart and half his empire,
By love I swear, and by thy precious self,
Ninias should sue in vain, and see me quit
A throne with him for banishment with thee.
Even Scythia's bleak inhospitable plains
Would yield a sweet asylum to our love;
For they would echo my Arsaces' name,
And sound his praise; those barren wilds, where first
Our passion grew, would be to me a court,
Nor should I cast a thought on Babylon.
But much I fear this subtle statesman means
To carry his resentment further still:
I've searched his soul, and know the blackness of it:
Or I mistake, or guilt sits lightly on him;
Already he is jealous of thy glory,
He fears, and hates thee.

ARSACES.

And I hate him more,
But fear him not, since Azema is mine:
Keep thou thy faith, and I despise his anger.
At least I share with him the royal favor:

I saw the queen, and her humanity
Equalled the pride of Assur: when I fell
Prostrate before her, gently she upraised me,
And called me the support of Babylon:
With pride I heard the flattering voice of her
Whose name contending kings unite to honor:
The distance 'twixt her royal state and mine
Was lessened soon by mildest condescension;
It touched, it melted me; and, after thee,
To me she seemed, of all the human race,
Most nearly to resemble the divine.

AZEMA.

If she protects us, Assur's threats are vain:
I heed them not.

ARSACES.

Inspired by thee, I went,
Fearless and brave, to lay before the feet
Of my great mistress, that aspiring passion
Which Assur dreads, and Azema approves;
When lo, that very moment came a priest
From Egypt with Ammonian Jove's decree:
Trembling she opened quick the awful scroll,
First fixed her eyes on me, then sudden turned
Her face aside, and wept: stood fixed in grief
Like one distraught, then sighed, and vanished from me.
They tell me, she is fallen into despair,
And hath of late been dreadfully pursued
By some avenging god: I pity her:
'Tis wonderful that after fifteen years,
Heaven, that so long defended, should at last
Oppress her thus: by what hath she offended
The angry gods, and wherefore are they changed?

AZEMA.

We hear of naught but dreadful spectres, omens,
And vengeance from above: the queen of late
Lets loose the reins of empire: we had cause
To fear for Babylon, least subtle Assur,
Who knows her weakness, in this dangerous time,
Should seize the helm, and bury all in ruin:
But the queen came, and all was calm again;
All owned the power of her despotic sway.
If I have any knowledge of the court,
The queen hates Assur, but keeps fair with him,
And watches close; they're fearful of each other,
Would quarrel soon, but that some secret cause,
Some mutual interest, still prevents a rupture:
I saw her fire indignant at his name;
The blushes on her cheeks betrayed her thoughts,
And her heart seemed to glow with deep resentment:
But sudden changes happen in a court;
Return, and speak to her.

ARSACES.

I will; but know not
Whether again I e'er shall gain admittance.

AZEMA.

Thou hast my vows, my wishes, and my prayers
For thy success: I glory in my love,
And in my duty: let Sémiramis
Rule o'er the vanquished East, I envy her
Nor fame nor conquest; let the world be hers,
Arsaces mine: but Assur comes this way.

ARSACES.

The traitor! how I shudder at his presence!
My soul abhors him.

SCENE II.

ASSUR, ARSACES, AZEMA.

ASSUR.

Your reception, sir,
I find, was noble, such as kings have oft
Solicited in vain: you saw the queen
In secret, did she not reprove a conduct
Injurious to my honor and her own?
Did she not tell thee Azema's designed
For Assur, not for thee? Long since her hand
To Ninias given was for the blood of kings
Alone reserved; and therefore is my right,
As next to the throne: did she acquaint you, sir,
Into what fatal snares your pride would lead you,
That neither fame nor honors will excuse
Your bold pretensions?

ARSACES.

I well know what's due
To your high birth, and to the rank you bear,
And should have paid it, though you had not thus
Instructed me; but as a master here
I own you not: your royal ancestors,
From Belus sprung, perhaps may give you claim
To Azema; the welfare of the state,
Present and future, all, I own, conspire
To raise your hopes of bliss, and make her yours:
These are your claims, and I acknowledge them:
But I have one that's worth them all: I love her:
I might have added this, that I avenged
And saved her, gave new lustre to the throne

Which she was born to fill, if I had chosen,
Like thee, to boast of my exploits before her.
But I must leave thee, to perform her orders.
Sémiramis and her I shall obey,
And them alone: a day perhaps may come
When thou shalt be our master: heaven sometimes
In anger sends us kings: but thou art deceived,
At least in one of thy ambitious views,
If amongst thy subjects thou hast ranked Arsaces.

ASSUR.

The measure's full: thou courtest thy own destruction.

SCENE III.

ASSUR, AZEMA.

ASSUR.

I've borne his insolence too long already,
'Tis time we enter on a nobler subject,
And worthier thy attention.

AZEMA.

Can there be one?
But speak.

ASSUR.

Ere long all Asia shall attend
On our resolves, and low concerns like these
Must pass unheeded by: a world demands
Our mutual care: Sémiramis is now
The shadow of herself, her glory's past,
That star which shone with such transcendent lustre,
Declining now, sends forth a feeble ray;

The people see and wonder at her fall,
Whilst every tongue demands a——successor:
That word sufficeth: you well know my right:
'Tis not for love to deal forth sovereign power,
And point out who shall rule in Babylon;
Not that my soul, to beauty blind, would make
A virtue of insensibility;
But I should blush for thee and for myself,
To see the welfare of a nation thus
Dependent on a sigh: thoughts worthier both
Must guide my fortune, and determine thine:
Our ancestors the same, we should offend
Their venerable shades, and lose the world
By not uniting: I astonish you:
These are harsh words for tender age like thine;
But I address me to the kings and heroes
From whom you sprung, to all those demigods
Whom here you represent: too long trod down
Beneath a woman's feet their ashes lay,
Their glories she eclipsed, usurped their power,
And fettered vanquished nations with her laws;
But she is gone, and thou must now support
The building she had raised: she had thy beauty,
And thou must have her courage: let not love
Or folly wrest the sceptre from thy hand,
But grasp it close: you will not sacrifice
To a Sarmatian's idle passion for you
The name you ought to honor, and the throne
You should ascend, of universal empire.

AZEMA.

Let not Arsaces be the theme, my lord,
Of your reproaches, but depend on me
To vindicate the honor of my race,
And to defend, whene'er occasion calls,

The rights of my loved ancestors; I know
Their worth and virtues, but I know not one
Amongst the heroes which Assyria boasts
More great, more virtuous, more beloved, than he,
Than this Sarmatian, whom you thus disdain.
Do justice to his merit: for myself,
When I shall bend to Hymen's laws, the queen
Must guide my choice, and at her hands alone
Will I receive a master: for the crowd,
The babbling echo of one secret voice,
I heed it not; nor know I if the people
Are tired of their obedience to a woman,
But still I see them bow the knee before her;
And if they murmur, murmur in the dust:
The hand of heaven, they say, is raised against her:
I am a stranger to her guilt, but think
That heaven would never have made choice of thee
To tell its high commands, or minister
Its justice to mankind: Sémiramis
Is still a queen, and you who lord it here
Receive from her the laws which you dispense:
For me, I own her power, and hers alone:
My glory is to obey, be thine the same.

SCENE IV.

ASSUR, CEDAR.

ASSUR.

Obey! I blush to think how long already
I have obeyed: O insupportable!
But say, hast thou succeeded, are the seeds
Of hatred sown in secret through the realm?

Will they spring up into a fruitful harvest
Of discord, and rebellion?

CEDAR.

All is well:
The people, long deluded by the arts
And dazzling glory of Sémiramis,
At length have lost their idle veneration:
No longer chained to silence, they demand
A successor: each lover of his country
Calls for a master, and looks up to thee.

ASSUR.

Heart-burning care! and ever-during shame!
Still must my hopes, my fate depend on her?
Was it for this that Ninus and his son
Fell by my hand, that Assur might be still
Only her first of slaves? So near the throne,
To languish in illustrious servitude,
And only be the second of mankind!
The queen was satisfied with Ninus' death,
But I went further, and pursued my blow:
Ninias, in secret murdered by my order,
Opened my passage to the throne; but she
Denied me entrance.—A long time in vain
I soothed her pride with flattery on her charms;
Still hoped one day to gain upon her youth
That happy influence which assiduous care
And humble adoration seldom fail
To win o'er artless minds that bend with ease:
I little knew the firmness of her soul,
Inflexible, and bold; the world alone
Could satisfy her pride: she seemed indeed
Most worthy of it: spite of my resentment,
I own she was, and yield the praise she merits.
The reins of empire, that flowed loose before,

Strongly she held; appeased the murmuring crowd,
Silenced their plaints, and quashed conspiring rebels;
Fought like a hero, like a monarch ruled:
She led her army and her people captive,
And spite of fame, with more than magic art,
Chained down the minds of men: the universe
Astonished stood, and trembled at her feet.
In short, her beauty, woman's best support,
Strengthened the laws which power and valor made;
And when I strove to raise conspiracies
My friends stood mute, and only could admire her.
At length the charm is broke: her power decays;
Her genius droops; remorse, and idle fears,
And fond credulity have bound her faith
To lying oracles, which knavish priests
Had taught to speak in Egypt's barren plain:
She pours her daily incense at their altars,
And wearies heaven with vows: Sémiramis
Creeps on a level now with common mortals,
And condescends to fear: I know her weakness:
Know, till she falls, Assur can never rise:
But I have raised the people's voice against her,
And she must yield: this blow decides her fate:
If she consents to give me Azema,
She is no longer queen; if she refuses,
The kingdom will revolt: on every side
The snare is laid, and nothing now can save her.
Yet, after all, perhaps I am deceived,
And fortune, so long called for, comes at last
But to betray me.

CEDAR.

If the queen is forced
To name a successor, and yields the princess
To Assur's bed, what can he have to fear,

When the divided branch of Asia's kings
Shall be united? all conspires to pave
Your way to empire.

ASSUR.

Azema is safe;
She must be mine; but wherefore send so far
For this Arsaces? she supports him too;
And when I would chastise his insolence,
Her interposing hand prevents me still:
A minister without the power, a prince
Without a subject, girt around with honors,
And yet a poor dependent, what is Assur?
All, all unite to persecute me now:
A peevish mistress, and a haughty rival,
Consulted priests that teach their gods to speak
Against me; with Sémiramis, who strives
To free herself, yet trembles at my presence:
But we shall see how far this proud ingrate
Will urge an angry rebel who defies her.

SCENE V.

ASSUR, OTANES, CEDAR.

OTANES.

My lord, the queen commands you to attend her
In secret, and alone.

ASSUR.

I shall obey
Her sacred orders, and with care perform
My sovereign's will.

SCENE VI.

ASSUR, CEDAR.

ASSUR.

Whence springs this sudden change?
These three months past she has avoided me,
Even as the object of her hatred: oft
When she beheld me she would cast her eyes
Down on the earth, as if she loathed the sight:
Whene'er we met, 'twas in a gaping crowd
Of hearers; when she spoke, her sighs and tears
Would interrupt our converse, or perchance
Silence was all the answer she would give me.
What can she want? What can she say to me?
But here she comes: 'tis she—wait you within.
[*To Cedar.*

SCENE VII.

SÉMIRAMIS, ASSUR.

SÉMIRAMIS.

My lord, I come to ease a troubled heart
Of its long hidden woes, and pour it all
Before you: I have ruled o'er Asia long,
And not ingloriously: Babylon perhaps
May pay this tribute to my memory,
And say Sémiramis deserved to rank
Among the greatest of her kings: thy hands
Have helped me to support the weight of empire;
With absolute dominion have I ruled,
Adored by all, and crowned with victory

On every side: intoxicated long
With flattery's pleasing incense, I forgot
The crimes that raised me to this envied state;
Forgot the justice of high heaven: it comes;
It speaks to me: Sémiramis must yield:
This noble structure, which I fondly thought
Superior to the injuries of time,
Is tottering now, and shakes from its foundation;
Means must be found to strengthen and support it.

ASSUR.

The work is yours, and you must finish it:
Foresee the attacks of time, and stop his rapine:
Who shall obscure the lustre of thy days,
Or wherefore fearest thou heaven whilst earth obeys
thee?

SÉMIRAMIS.

Yonder the ashes of my husband lie;
Canst thou look there, and wonder at my fears?

ASSUR.

I cannot bear to hear the noisy crowd
Still talk of Ninus: wherefore should remembrance
Call back the thoughts of that inglorious reign?
Can they believe, that, after fifteen years,
His angry spirit still calls out for justice?
Ere now he would have taken due vengeance on us,
Had he the power: why from the peaceful realms
Of dark oblivion wouldst thou call the dead,
Or search for truth in lying oracles?
I am astonished too, but 'tis at thee,
And thy vain fears: to make the gods propitious,
We must be resolute: this idle phantom,
At once the child and parent of your fears,
Why should it thus alarm you? Prodigies

Never appear to those who dread them not:
Baits to allure the unthinking multitude,
By knaves invented, and by fools believed;
The great despise them: but if nobler views
Inspire thy soul to immortalize the blood
Of Belus, if the beauteous Azema
Claims her high rank.——

SÉMIRAMIS.

Assur, on that I came
To speak with thee: our Babylon demands,
For such is Ammon's will, a successor:
Heaven and my people will be satisfied
When I shall take a partner to my throne:
Thou knowest, my pride could never condescend
To a divided sway; 'twas my resolve
To rule alone, while the impatient world
Urged me in vain; and when the people's voice,
Which now is echoed by the voice of heaven,
Still presses me, in the bloom of youth, to give
A sovereign to mankind, I still refused:
If I had yielded then to any claim,
It had been thine; you had a right to hope,
And to expect it; but you knew too well,
How much Sémiramis abhorred a master.
Without submitting to a tie so fatal,
I made thee then the second of mankind,
And only not my equal; 'twas enough,
I thought, to satisfy even thy ambition.
At length the gods make known their will divine,
And I obey them: hear the oracle:
"All shall again be well at Babylon,
When Hymen's torch a second time shall blaze
Propitious; then shalt thou, O cruel wife,
And wretched mother, then shall thou appease

The shade of Ninus." Thus the voice of heaven
Declares its sacred will: I know thy arts;
Know, thou hast formed a party in the state,
And mean to oppose me with the royal blood
From whence you sprung: from thee and Azema
My successor, it seems, must rise; I know
You look that way, and she perhaps aspires
To equal honors; but, observe me well:
I shall not suffer your united claims
To rob me of my right: remember, sir,
You know my will; 'tis constant, and as fate
Irrevocable: thinkest thou now the God
Whose arm is lifted o'er me hath deprived
My soul of all its wonted strength and spirit,
Or dost thou still behold Sémiramis,
Who can support the honor of her throne?
Know, Babylon ere long shall at my hands
Receive a master: whether the high choice
Shall fall on thee, or be another's lot,
I'll take a sovereign as a sovereign ought:
Bring me the magi and the princess here
To join their voices with Sémiramis.
To give away my freedom and my empire
Is the first, greatest act of royal power,
And therefore let it be performed with awe
And silence due to my authority.
Heaven hath appointed this great day to show
Its mercy to me, and the gods at length
Remit their anger; nothing can disarm it
But my repentance; 'tis the only virtue:
Trust me, it is, howe'er you may despise it,
Remaining for the guilty: weak, I know,
And fearful thou esteemest me; but henceforth
Remember, Assur, guilt alone is weakness:
Think not that fear can e'er disgrace a throne,

It has done good to kings, and might to thee;
I tell thee, statesman, to obey the gods,
And tremble at their power, is no abasement.

SCENE VIII.

ASSUR.

[*Alone.*

Astonishment! such language, such designs!
Or is it artifice, or weakness in her,
Or cowardice or courage? Does she mean,
By yielding thus, to prop her tottering power,
And by our union to defeat my purpose?
I must not think, it seems, of Azema,
Because, perhaps, I'm destined for herself.
It must be so. What all my cares in vain
Solicited, my flattery of her charms,
My deep intrigues, and our united crimes,
With all her fears, could never gain, at length
An idle dream, and a dark oracle
From Egypt have performed. What power unknown
Decrees the fate of mortals? Great events
Hang on the slenderest thread: still I am doubtful:
I'll see Sémiramis again; she seemed
Too much in haste; such sudden resolutions
Betray an overanxious mind, and those
Who change with ease are either weak, or wicked.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

SÉMIRAMIS, OTANES.

[*The scene represents an apartment in the palace.*

SÉMIRAMIS.

Who would have thought, Otanes, that the gods,
Offended as they were, at length should smile
Propitious thus, and threaten but to save!
Should drop the uplifted thunder from their hand,
And pardon me; should send Arsaces hither
To change my fate! for know it is their will
That I should wed, and by a second tie
Expiate the crimes of my first fatal nuptials.
They are the great disposers of our hearts,
And mine with pleasure yields to their decrees:
It even outruns their purposes: Arsaces,
I'm thine; for thou wert born to rule o'er me,
And o'er the world.

OTANES.

Arsaces! he!

SÉMIRAMIS.

Thou knowest,
In Scythia's plains, when I avenged the Persian,
And conquered Asia, this young hero fought
Beneath his father's banners, and, surrounded
With captives, brought to me the bloody spoils,
And, blushing, laid his victims at my feet.
When first I saw him, I could feel his heart,
As by some secret power, attracting mine
Insensibly towards him; all mankind,
Besides Arsaces, seemed not worth my notice.

Assur grew jealous of him, and ever since
Has fired with indignation at his name;
Whilst his dear image still employed my thoughts,
Before that voice which guides my every word
And every action named him for my husband,
Before the gods had pointed out Arsaces.

OTANES.

It was indeed a noble conquest, thus
To bend that haughty spirit which disdained
The proffered homage of our Eastern monarchs,
Who as her subjects, not as lovers, still
Accepted kings! You who contemned those charms,
That sovereign beauty, which extended wide
Your universal empire; whilst your eyes
Pierced every heart, you scarce would condescend
To mark their power; and dost thou yield at last
To love's imperious sway; to fears and horror
Succeed the tender passions? Can it be?

SÉMIRAMIS.

O, no; it is not love: I am not fallen
So much beneath myself, as to bestow
On beauty the reward that's due to virtue;
I feel a nobler passion in my breast:
Alas! such weakness would but ill become
Sémiramis: unhappy as I am,
For me to think of love, Otanes, how
Couldst thou suppose it? Once I was a mother,
But scarce had studied to deserve the name
By my fond cares, when heaven in anger snatched
My child away, and left me here alone
A prey to anguish. I had nothing near me
That I could love; and, midst my grandeur, felt
An aching void within my soul. I fled
The court, endeavored to avoid myself,

And sought relief in these proud monuments,
Amusing flatterers of a restless heart
That shunned reflection: rest was still a stranger,
And long remained so; but he comes once more,
I feel him now, and wonder at the power
That charmed him hither: 'twas Arsaces; he
Shall hold the place of husband and of son,
A conquered world, and all my glories past.
How much I owe to thee, celestial power,
Who thus propitious leadest me to the altar
So long abhorred; and hast thyself inspired
That passion which alone can make me happy!

OTANES.

But what will be the rage and grief of Assur?
Hast thou reflected on it, when he hears
Thy new resolves? He is not without hopes:
The people have already fixed thy choice
On him, and his resentment will not end
In mere complaints.

SÉMIRAMIS.

I never have deceived,
And therefore fear him not: these fifteen years,
Whate'er his views have been, I've taught him still
To rank but with my subjects, though the first
Amongst them; and set bounds to his ambition,
Which he hath never o'erleaped: I reigned alone;
And if this feeble hand so long could guide
The helm of power, and curb his haughtiness,
What can his courage or his cunning do
Against Arsaces and Sémiramis?
Yes: Ninus hath accepted my repentance,
And leaves the mansions of the dead to urge
Our happy union: his illustrious shade
Again would rage to see his murderer seize

His throne and bed: this calls him from the tomb,
And Ammon's oracles unite with him
To crown my bliss: no more the awful virtue
Of Oroes affrights me; I've sent for him
To be a witness of the great event,
And soon expect him here.

OTANES.

His honored name
And sacred character may give indeed
A sanction to your choice.

SÉMIRAMIS.

I know it will,
And establish my resolves.

OTANES.

Behold, he comes.

SCENE II.

SÉMIRAMIS, OROES,

SÉMIRAMIS.

Great successor of Zoroaster, welcome:
To-day must Babylon receive a king;
Thy office is to crown him; is all ready
For the solemnity?

OROES.

The magi wait
Thy pleasure, and the nobles all attend:
To pay obedience to the sovereign power
Is all my duty, and I shall fulfil it:
I am not to judge kings, for that belongs
To heaven alone.

SÉMIRAMIS.

By this mysterious language,
It seems you disapprove my purpose.

OROES.

Madam,
I know it not, but wish it fair success.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Thou canst interpret heaven's high will: these signs
Which I have seen, can they be fatal to me?
A spectre hath of late, perhaps some god,
Appeared, and in the bosom of the earth
Re-entered soon: what power hath thus broke down
The eternal barrier that divides the light
From darkness? wherefore should a mortal thus
Rise from the tomb to visit me?

OROES.

Know, heaven
Doth oft suspend its own eternal laws
When justice bids, reversing death's decree;
Thus to chastise the sovereigns of the earth,
And terrify mankind.

SÉMIRAMIS.

The oracles
Demand a sacrifice.

OROES.

It shall be offered.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Eternal justice, thou whose piercing eye
Beholdest my naked heart, O fill it not
Again with horror, bury in oblivion

My first unhappy nuptials!
Oroes, stay.
[*To Oroes, who is retiring.*

OROES.

[*Returning.*
I thought my presence might disturb you, madam.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Return, and answer me: this morning, say,
Did not Arsaces offer at your altars
Gifts to the gods?

OROES.

He did; and precious were they:
Arsaces is the favorite of heaven.

SÉMIRAMIS.

I know he is, and I rejoice to hear it.
Can I be wretched if I trust to him?

OROES.

He is the empire's best support; the gods
Conducted him; his glory is their care.

SÉMIRAMIS.

With transport I accept the fair presage,
Whilst hope and peace return to calm my breast.
Away: again let purest incense rise
Before your altars; let your magi come
And sanctify the choice; bring down the smiles
Of the assenting gods, and make us happy.
Henceforth may Babylon with me revive,
And shine amongst the nations of the earth
With double splendor! Go thou, and prepare
The solemn pomp.

SCENE III.

SÉMIRAMIS, OTANES.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Heaven seconds my design,
And I am only the interpreter
Of its high will, to give the world a master:
Thus to receive a kingdom at my hand
Will strike him with astonishment: even now
How little thinks he of the approaching greatness!
How will proud Assur and his fawning crowd
Be humbled! But a word, and the whole earth
Falls at his feet; and, grateful as he is,
I know he will repay me: I shall wed him,
And for my portion carry him a world;
My glory's pure, and now I shall enjoy it.

SCENE IV.

SÉMIRAMIS, OTANES, MITRANES.

AN OFFICER OF THE PALACE.

OTANES.

Arsaces begs admittance to your presence,
To lay his sorrows at your feet.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Arsaces!
What sorrows can Arsaces feel when I
Am near him, he who thus hath banished mine?
Quick, let him come: he knows not yet his power

O'er the fond heart of his Sémiramis:
O thou dread shade whose voice alarmed my soul,
Whose blood no more calls out for vengeance on me,
And you, the guardian gods of this great empire,
Of the Assyrians, Ninus, and my son,
Unite to bless Arsaces! Ha! the sight
Alarms me; whence can these strange terrors rise?

SCENE V.

SÉMIRAMIS, ARSACES.

ARSACES.

O queen, I am devoted to thy service;
My life is thine; and when I shed this blood,
I am rewarded if it flows for thee.
My father had some small renown in arms;
I saw him perish bravely in the field,
And at the head of thy victorious bands;
He left his hapless son a fair example,
Perhaps but ill pursued: I'll not recall
The memory of my father's services,
'Twould ill become me; at your royal knees,
Though here I sue for favor and protection:
Pity the rashness of a guilty youth,
Who listened to the dictates of imprudence,
And even in serving feared he might offend you.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Offend me! thou, Arsaces! fear it not.

ARSACES.

To-day you give your kingdom and your hand:
My heart, I know, should on the great event
Keep secret all its fears, and humbly still

In silence, with depending monarchs, wait
To know our master; but this Assur steps
So haughtily, and triumphs in his conquest,
We cannot brook his pride: the people call him
Already their new sovereign; his high blood
And rank support him: may he prove himself
Worthy of both! but I have still a soul
Too proud to bend beneath him, or adore
The power I had defied: his jealous heart
I know detests Arsaces: let me then
Retire in safety, far from him, and thee:
Permit me to revisit the dear climes
Where first I served my royal mistress, there
His tyranny can never reach: perhaps
I may hereafter—

SÉMIRAMIS.

Wilt thou leave me then,
And fearest thou Assur?

ARSACES.

No: Arsaces fears
Naught but the anger of Sémiramis.
Perhaps thou knowest my fond ambition, then
I've cause indeed to tremble.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Hope the best,
And know that Assur ne'er shall be thy master.

ARSACES.

I own it shocked my soul to look on him
As Ninus' successor: but is he then
Designed for Azema? forgive this bold
Presumptuous questioner: long since I know
She was to Ninias given, proud Assur sprung

From the same race, and claims her as his own:
I am but a poor subject, yet I dare——

SÉMIRAMIS.

Such subjects are my kingdom's best support;
I know thee well; thy noble soul, superior
To vulgar minds, hath sought Sémiramis,
Not for her fortunes, but herself; thy eyes
Are fixed on her true interest, and on thee
I shall depend: Assur and Azema
Shall never meet; their union would be dangerous:
But their designs are known, and by my care
Will be prevented.

ARSACES.

Since my heart at length
Is open to thee, and thou hast discovered——

AZEMA.

[*Enters suddenly, and throws herself at the feet of Sémiramis.*

O queen, permit me thus———

SÉMIRAMIS.

Rise, Azema:
Where'er my choice may light, thou mayest depend
On my protection, and shalt find respect
Due to thy birth; for, destined as thou wert
To be the wife of my lamented son,
I look upon thee with a mother's eye:
[*To them both.*
Go, place yourselves with those whom I have called
To witness my resolves, and mark my choice.
[*To Arsaces.*
Be thou, my best protector, near the throne.

SCENE VI.

The apartment of Sémiramis opens into a magnificent saloon richly ornamented; a number of officers in their proper habits on the steps of the throne, which is raised in the middle; the satraps on each side: the high priest enters with the magi, and places himself between Assur and Arsaces: the queen in the midst with Azema, and her attendants: guards at the lower end of the saloon.

OROES.

Ye princes, magi, warriors, the support
Of Babylon, assembled by command
From great Sémiramis, the will of heaven
Soon shall ye know: the gods that guard our empire
Have fixed on this important hour to work
A great and mighty change; whoe'er the queen
Shall here appoint her sovereign and our own
It is our duty to obey; and here
I bring my tribute to the throne, my prayers
And wishes for the glory and the welfare
Of them, and of their kingdom: may these days
Of joy and gladness ne'er be changed to hours
Of grief and sorrow, nor these songs of mirth
To mournful plaints!

AZEMA.

A king, my lords, will soon
Be named; whoe'er he be, the choice will injure
Myself alone; but Azema was born
And must remain a subject; I submit
To the queen's pleasure, and on her protection
Shall still depend; nor with the dark presage
Of future ills shall interrupt your joy:
But leave you my example of obedience.

ASSUR.

Howe'er the queen may choose, and heaven determine,
We must consult the public good alone;
Let us then swear by this imperial throne,
And great Sémiramis, to yield submissive,
And without murmuring to obey her will.

ARSACES.

I swear it; and this arm that fought for her,
This heart obedient ever to her voice,
Which next the voice of heaven I still revered,
This blood which flowed with pleasure for her sake,
Shall be devoted to that royal master
Whom she appoints.

HIGH PRIEST.

I wait the great award
Of heaven and Sémiramis.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Enough:
Each to his place, and now attend, my people.

[*She seats herself on the throne.*

[AZEMA, ASSUR, OROES (*the high priest*) *and* ARSACES *take their places, and she proceeds.*

If in that hand which custom and the laws
Of an imperious husband had confined
To homely cares, and to a distaff chained,
I bore aloft the sceptre and the sword,
Beyond my subjects' hope, nor sunk beneath
The weight of empire, let me now extend
To latest times its glory: 'tis my purpose
This day to take a partner in the throne:

The gods must be obeyed, whose dread command
At length subdued my long unconquered heart:
They who deprived me of my son, perhaps
May one day raise an heir to Babylon
Worthy of empire, who shall follow me
Through all the thorny paths that I have trod,
Finish my work, and make my reign immortal.
I might have chosen a sovereign from the kings
That dwell around me, but they are all my foes,
Or tributary slaves: a foreign hand
Shall never wield this sceptre: my own subjects
Are better than the kings which they have conquered:
Belus was born a subject; if he gained
The diadem, he owed it to the people,
And to himself: by rights like his I hold
The power supreme; and, mistress of a kingdom
Larger than his, have bent beneath my yoke
The nations of the East, which Belus ne'er
Had seen or heard of: what he but attempted
Sémiramis performed; for they who found
A kingdom, and they only, can preserve it.
You want a king who may be worthy of you,
Worthy of such an empire, shall I add
Worthy the hand that crowns him, and the heart
Which I shall give: I have consulted heaven,
My country's weal, the interest of mankind,
And choose a king to make the world more happy.
Adore the hero, see in him revived
The princes of my honored race; observe him,
And know, this king, this hero, is—Arsaces.

[*She descends from the throne, and they all rise.*

AZEMA.

Arsaces! the perfidious——

ASSUR.

Rage and vengeance!

ARSACES.

Believe me, Azema———

OROES.

Just heaven! avert
These omens.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Thou who sanctifiest my choice,
Confirm it at the altar: see in him
Ninus and Ninias both restored.

[*It thunders, and the tomb shakes.*

O heaven!
What do I hear?

OROES.

Great gods, protect us now!

SÉMIRAMIS.

The thunder comes, in anger or in love
I know not: pardon, gracious gods! Arsaces
Must win them to forgiveness. Ha! what voice
Distracts me thus? and see, the tomb is open.
O heaven! I die.

[*The ghost of Ninus comes out of the tomb.*

ASSUR.

The shade of Ninus' self.
Gods! is it possible?

ARSACES.

What sayest thou? speak,
Thou god of terrors.

ASSUR.

O unfold thy tale.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Comest thou to pardon, or to punish me?
It is thy sceptre and thy bed which here
I have bestowed: speak, is he worthy of it?
Determine: I obey thee.

THE GHOST OF NINUS TO ARSACES.

Thou shalt reign,
Arsaces, but there are some dreadful crimes
Which thou must expiate: hie thee to the tomb,
And to my ashes offer sacrifice:
Serve me and Ninias: remember well
Thy father: listen to the pontiff.

ARSACES.

O!
Thou venerable shade, thou demigod,
Who dwellest within these walls, the sight of thee
Inspires but does not amaze Arsaces:
Yes, I will go, on peril of my life,
And meet thee in the tomb: but tell me, what
Must be the sacrifice? O speak! he's gone.

[*The ghost retires towards the entrance of the mausoleum.*

SÉMIRAMIS.

Thou honored spirit of my lord, permit me
Thus on my knees to pour my sorrows forth,
Permit me in the tomb to——

GHOST.

[*At the entrance of the tomb.*

Stop: no farther:
Respect my ashes: when the time is come
I'll send for thee.

[*The ghost goes into the tomb, and the mausoleum closes.*

ASSUR.

Amazing!

SÉMIRAMIS.

Follow me,
My people, to the temple: be not thus
Dismayed: for know, the gentle shade of Ninus
Is not implacable; it loves your king,
And therefore will it spare Sémiramis:
Heaven that inspired my choice will now support it:
Haste then, and pray for me, and for Arsaces.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Representing the porch of the temple.

ARSACES, AZEMA.

ARSACES.

Do not oppress me in this hour of grief,
And aggravate my sorrows; I have borne
Enough already: this dread oracle
Affrights me; prodigies on every side
Disturb the course of nature: heaven deprives me
Of all, if Azema is lost.

AZEMA.

No more,
False man, nor to the horrors of this day
Add the remembrance of thy perfidy;
No more the terrors of Sémiramis,
The walking spectre, and the opening grave,
Appal me now; of all the prodigies

Which I have seen, thy base inconstancy
Hath shocked me most: go on, appease the shade
Of Ninus, and begin the sacrifice
With Azema; behold, and strike the victim.

ARSACES.

It is too much; my heart was not prepared
Against this cruel stroke: thou knowest, my soul
Prefers thee to the empire of the world:
What was the object of that fame in arms
I held so dear, of all my victories?
All my ambition hoped for was at last
To merit thee: Sémiramis, thou knowest,
Was dear to both; thy tongue unites with mine
To praise her; she was still the guardian god
That cherished and protected us; as such
We both revered her with that pious zeal
And chaste regard which mortals bear to heaven:
Judge of my spotless faith by my surprise
At the queen's choice, and mark the precipice
It leads us to, thence learn our future fate.

AZEMA.

I know it.

ARSACES.

Learn, that neither thou nor empire
Were destined for Arsaces; know, that son
Whom I must serve, the child of Ninus, he
Who must inherit here——

AZEMA.

Well; what of him?

ARSACES.

That Ninias, he who from his cradle lit
The torch of Hymen with thee, who was born
My rival and my master——

AZEMA.

Ninias!

ARSACES.

Lives;
And will be with us soon.

AZEMA.

Ha! then the queen——

ARSACES.

Even to this day deceived, laments his death.

AZEMA.

Ninias alive!

ARSACES.

It is a secret yet
Within the temple, and she knows it not.

AZEMA.

But Ninus crowns thee, and his widow's thine.

ARSACES.

Ay, but his son was born for Azema;
He is my king, so says the oracle,
And I must serve him.

AZEMA.

But love claims his own,
And will be heard in spite of all, Arsaces:
His orders are not doubtful, or obscure.
Love is my oracle, and that alone
Shall be obeyed. Ninias, thou sayest, yet lives,
Let him appear, and let Sémiramis
Recall her plighted faith to him; let Ninus
Rise from the tomb, to join the fatal knot
Made in our infant years; let Ninias come,
My king, thy master, and thy rival, fired

With all the love which once Arsaces had
For Azema, then see how I will slight
His proffered vows; then shalt thou see me scorn
The sceptre at my feet, and spurn a crown
Which is my due: where is he now? What secret,
What mystery veils him from us? Let him come;
But know, nor Ninias, nor Sémiramis,
No, nor the sacred spirit of his father
Risen from the tomb, nor all the powers of nature
Thrown in confusion, from my heart would wrest
The image of my perjured dear Arsaces:
Go, ask thy own, if it will dare to act
As mine hath done. What are those dreadful crimes
Which thou must expiate? if thou e'er shouldst break
The sacred tie that binds us, if thou art false,
I know no crime, no treachery like thy own.
I see the sage interpreter of fate
This way advancing; love will never plead
Thy cause with heaven, if thou betrayest me: go,
From Ninus' hand receive thy doom; remember,
Thy fate depends on heaven, and mine on thee.

[*Exit Azema.*

ARSACES.

Arsaces still is thine: stay, cruel maid:
How mingled is our happiness and woe!
What strange events that contradict each other——

SCENE II.

ARSACES, OROES, *the magi attending.*

OROES.

[*To Arsaces.*

Let us retire to yonder lonely walk;

I see you are much moved: prepare yourself
For strokes more dreadful.

[*To the magi.*

Bring the royal wreath.

[*The magi bring the coffer.*

This letter, and this sacred sword, to thee,
Arsaces, I deliver.

ARSACES.

Reverend father,
Wilt thou not save me from the precipice
That gapes before me? wilt thou not at length
Uplift the veil, that from my eyes conceals
My future fate?

OROES.

'Twill be removed, my son;
The hour is come, when in his dreary mansions,
Ninus from thee expects a sacrifice
That shall appease his angry spirit.

ARSACES.

What
Can Ninus ask, what sacrifice from me?
Must I be his avenger, when his son
Still lives? Let Ninias come; he is my king,
And I will serve him.

OROES.

'Tis his father's will,
Thou must obey him: an hour hence, Arsaces,
Be at his tomb, armed with this sacred sword,
And with this wreath adorned, which Ninus wore,
And which thyself did bring to me.

ARSACES.

The wreath
Of Ninus!

OROES.

'Tis his royal will that thus
Thou shouldst appear, to offer up the blood
That must be shed; the victim will be there:
Strike thou, and leave the rest to him, and heaven.

ARSACES.

If he requires my life, I'll give it him:
But where is Ninias? thou speakest naught of him:
Thou hast not told me how his father gives
To me his kingdom and his queen.

OROES.

To thee
His queen! O heaven, to thee Sémiramis
Be given! Arsaces, the important hour
Which I had promised thee is come, when thou
Shalt know thy fate, and this abandoned woman.

ARSACES.

Great gods!

OROES.

'Twas she who murdered Ninus.

ARSACES.

She,
Saidst thou, the queen?

OROES.

Assur, that foul disgrace
Of human nature, Assur gave the poison.

ARSACES.

I'm not surprised at Assur's cruelty,
But that a wife, a queen, and such a queen,

The pride of sovereigns, the delight of nations,
That she should e'er be guilty of a crime
So horrible! it passes all belief.
How can such virtues and such guilt as hers
Subsist together!

OROES.

How indeed! the question
Is worthy of thy noble heart: but now
'Twere needless to dissemble, every moment
Is big with some new secret, horrible
To nature, who already whispers to thee
Her soft complaints; thy generous heart, I see,
Spite of thyself, is shocked, and mourns within thee:
But wonder not that Ninus from the tomb
Indignant rises on this seat of guilt;
He comes to break the horrid nuptial tie,
Woven by the furies, and expose to light
Unpunished crimes; to save his son from incest:
He speaks to, he expects thee: know thy father,
For thou art Ninias, and the queen's thy mother.

ARSACES.

Thou hast o'erpowered me in one dreadful moment
With such repeated wonders, that I stand
Astonished, and the night of death surrounds me.
Am I his son, and can it be?

OROES.

Thou art:
Ninus, the morn before he died, foresaw
His end approaching; knew the deadly draught
Which he had drunk was ministered to thee
By the same hand, and, dying as thou wert,
Withdrew thee from this wicked court: for Assur
Had poisoned thee that he might wed thy mother,

Thought to exterminate the royal race,
And open thus his passage to the throne:
But whilst the kingdom mourned thy loss, Phradates,
Our faithful friend, secreted and preserved thee;
With skilful hand the precious herbs prepared,
O'er Persia spread by her benignant God,
Whose wondrous power drew forth the latent venom
From thy parched limbs: his own son dying, you
Supplied his place, and still wert called Arsaces.
He waited patient for some lucky change,
But the great judge of kings had otherwise
Determined; truth at length descends from heaven,
And vengeance rises from the tomb.

ARSACES.

O God!
Enough already hast thou tried thy servant,
Or must I yield that life which you restored?
Yes: I was born midst grandeur, shame, and horror:
My mother—Ninus! O what deadly purpose—
But if the traitor Assur was alone
To blame, if he———

OROES.

[*Giving him the letter.*
Behold this paper here,
Too faithful witness of her guilt, then say
If yet a doubt remains.

ARSACES.

Haste, give it me,
And clear them all. [*He reads.*
Ha! *"Ninus to Phradates:*
I die by poison, guard my Ninias well,
Defend him from his foes: my guilty wife———"

OROES.

Needest thou more proof? this witness came from thee.
He had not finished; death, thou seest, broke off
The imperfect scroll, and stopped his feeble hand;
Phradates hath unfolded all the rest,
Read this, and learn the whole.

[*Gives him another paper.*

It is enough
That Ninus hath commanded thee, he guides
Thy steps, and leads thee to the throne, but says
He must have blood.

ARSACES.

[*After reading the paper.*

O day of miracles,
And you, ye dreadful oracles from hell,
Dark as the tomb which I must visit, how
Shall I unveil your secret purposes,
When he who is to make the sacrifice
Knows not his victim! Who shall guide my choice?
I tremble at it.

OROES.

Tremble for the guilty.
Amidst the horrors that oppress thy soul,
The gods will guide thee; deem not thou thyself
A common mortal, from the race of men
Thou art distinguished, set apart by heaven,
And noted by its signature divine,
Walk thou secure, though night conceals thy fate,
The gods of thy great ancestors employ thee
But as their instrument. What right hast thou
To litigate their power, and to oppose
Thy masters? Saved from death, as thou hast been,
Be thankful still; complain not, but adore.

SCENE III.

ARSACES, MITRANES.

ARSACES.

I cannot reconcile this strange event:
Sémiramis my mother! can it be?

MITRANES.

[*Entering in haste.*

My lord, the people in this hour of terror
Demand their king: permit me first to hail thee
The husband of Sémiramis, and lord
Of Babylon: the queen is hasting hither
In search of thee; I bless the happy hour
That gave her to thee: ha! not answer me!
Despair is in thy looks, thy lips are closed
In dreadful silence, thou art pale with terror,
And thy whole frame's disordered: what has passed?
What have they said?

ARSACES.

I'll fly to Azema.

MITRANES.

Amazing! can it be Arsaces? fly
A queen's embraces; scorn her proffered love;
Insult her choice; the royal hand that spurned
Kings for thy sake! thus are her hopes betrayed?

ARSACES.

Gods! 'tis Sémiramis herself; O Ninus,
Now let thy tomb in its dark bosom hide
Her crimes, and me!

SCENE IV.

SÉMIRAMIS, ARSACES.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Arsaces, all is ready,
We want but thee, great master of the world,
Whose fate, like mine, depends on thee; O haste,
And make our bliss complete! with joy I see
Thy brows encircled with that sacred wreath:
The priest, I know, was by the gods commanded
To crown thee with it; heaven and hell at once
Approve my choice, and by these signs confirm it:
Assur's seditious party, struck with awe
And holy reverence, tremble at my presence;
Ninus, at length propitious, hath required
A sacrifice, O haste, and give it him,
That we may soon be blest: the people's hearts
Are all with us, and Assur's threats are vain.

ARSACES.

[*Walking about with great emotion.*

Assur! away! in his perfidious blood
The parricide—we will revenge thee, Ninus.

SÉMIRAMIS.

What do I hear? just heaven! speakest thou of him,
Of Ninus?

ARSACES.

[*Wildly.*

Saidst thou not, his guilty hand

[*Coming to himself.*

Had shed—to arm against his queen! the slave,
That was enough to make me hate him.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Haste then,
Receive my hand, and thus begin thy vengeance.

ARSACES.

My father!

SÉMIRAMIS.

Ha! what looks are those, Arsaces?
Is this the soft submissive tender heart
Which I expected from thee, when I gave
My willing hand? That fearful prodigies,
And spectres rising from their dark domain,
Should leave the marks of horror on thy soul,
Alarms me not, I feel them too, but less
When I behold Arsaces: do not thus
O'erspread this fairest dawn of happiness
With sorrow's gloomy shade, but still appear
Such as thou wert when trembling at my feet,
Lest Assur e'er should be thy master; fear
Nor him, nor Ninus and his angry shade;
My dear Arsaces, thou art my support,
My lord, my husband.

ARSACES.

[*Turning aside from her.*
'Tis too much, O stop:
Her guilt o'erwhelms me.

SÉMIRAMIS.

How his soul's disturbed!
Alas! he wants that peace which he bestowed
On me.

ARSACES.

Sémiramis——

SÉMIRAMIS.

What wouldst thou? speak.

ARSACES.

I cannot: leave me, leave me: hence! begone.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Amazing! leave thee! can I e'er forsake
Arsaces? O explain this mystery to me,
And ease my tortured soul: it makes us both
Unhappy:—ha! despair is in thy aspect;
Thou chillest my veins with horror, and thy eyes
Are dreadful; they affright me more than heaven
And hell united to oppose my vows:
Scarce can my trembling lips pronounce, I love thee:
Some power invisible now leads me on
Towards thee, now withholds me from thy arms,
And mingles, how I know not, tenderest love
With sentiments of horror and despair.

ARSACES.

Hate me, abhor me.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Canst thou bid me hate thee?
Cruel Arsaces, no: I still must trace
Thy footsteps, still my heart must follow thine:
What is that paper which thou lookest on thus
With horror, whilst thy eyes are bathed in tears,
Does that contain a reason for thy coldness?

ARSACES.

It does.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Then give it me.

ARSACES.

I must not: darest thou—

SÉMIRAMIS.

I'll have it.

ARSACES.

Leave to me that dreadful scroll,
To thee 'twere fatal, I have use for it.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Whence came it?

ARSACES.

From the gods.

SÉMIRAMIS.

And wrote by whom?

ARSACES.

Wrote by my father.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Ha! what sayest thou?

ARSACES.

Tremble.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Give it me, let me know at once my fate.

ARSACES.

Urge it no more; there is death in every line.

SÉMIRAMIS.

No matter: clear my doubts, or I shall think
That thou art guilty.

ARSACES.

Ye immortal powers
That guide our steps, it is to your decrees
That I submit.

SÉMIRAMIS.

For the last time, Arsaces,
I here command thee, listen, and obey.

ARSACES.

[*Giving her the letter.*

O may thy justice, heaven, be satisfied!
And this the only punishment that e'er
Shall be inflicted on her! now 'tis past,
And thou wilt know too much.

[*She reads.*

SÉMIRAMIS.

[*To Otanes.*

What do I read?
Support me, or I die.

[*She faints.*

ARSACES.

She sees it all.

SÉMIRAMIS.

[*Coming to herself, after a long silence.*

Delay not, but fulfil thy destiny:
Punish this guilty, this unhappy wretch,
And in my blood wash out the deadly stain.
Nature deceived is horrible to both,
Avenge thy father, strike, and punish me.

ARSACES.

No: let the sacred character I bear,
The name of son, preserve me from that crime!
Much rather would I pierce the heart of him
Who still reveres thee, the poor lost Arsaces.

SÉMIRAMIS.

[*Kneeling.*

Be cruel as Sémiramis; she felt
No pity, therefore be the son of Ninus,
And take my life: thou wilt not; nay, thy tears
Even mix with mine: O Ninias, 'tis a day
Of horrors, yet there's pleasure in this pain.
Before thou givest me what I have deserved,
The stroke of death, let nature's voice be heard:
O let a guilty mother's tears bedew
That dear, that fatal hand.

ARSACES.

I am thy son,
'Tis not for thee, whate'er thy guilt, to fall
Thus at my feet: O rise, thy Ninias begs,
He loves thee still, still vows obedience to thee,
Respect and purest love: consider me
As a new subject, only more submissive,
More humble, than the rest; I hope, more dear.
Heaven that restores thy son is sure appeased:
The gods who pardon thee reserve their vengeance
For Assur; leave him to his fate.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Receive
My crown and sceptre, I have much disgraced them.

ARSACES.

Still, I beseech you, hold me ignorant
Of all, and let me with the world adore you.

SÉMIRAMIS.

O no: my guilt's too flagrant.

"I AM THY SON; 'TIS NOT FOR THEE,
WHATE'ER THY GUILT, TO FALL
THUS AT MY FEET"

ARSACES.

But repentance
May blot it out.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Ninus hath given to thee
The reins of empire, thou must not offend
His vengeful spirit.

ARSACES.

O it will relent
At thy remorse, and soften at my tears.
Otanes, in the name of heaven, preserve
My mother, and conceal the horrid secret.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

SÉMIRAMIS, OTANES.

OTANES.

O 'twas some god that smiled propitious on thee,
Who thus prevented these abhorred nuptials;
Whilst nature shuddered at the approaching danger,
Gave thee a son, and saved thee thus from incest.
The oracles of Ammon, and the voice
From hell, the shades of Ninus, all declared
The day appointed for thy second marriage
Should end thy sorrows, but they never said
That marriage e'er should be accomplished: No:
The nuptials were prepared: thou hast fulfilled
Thy destiny: thy son reveres thee still:
Mild is the justice of offended heaven,
Which only asks a private sacrifice:
This day Sémiramis shall still be happy.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Alas! there is no happiness for me,
Otanes: Ninias smiles indeed upon me:
A mother's sorrows for a time will plead
More strongly with him than the blood of Ninus,
And my past crimes; but soon his tenderness
And filial love may change perhaps to wrath
And fierce resentment for a murdered father.

OTANES.

What fearest thou from a son? what dire presage—

SÉMIRAMIS.

Fear is the natural punishment of guilt,
And still attends it: this detested Assur,
Has he attempted aught, say, does he know
What passed of late, and who Arsaces is?

OTANES.

The dreadful secret still remains unknown;
The shade of Ninus is by all revered;
But how to comprehend the oracle
They know not; how they must avenge his ashes;
How serve his son—the minds of men are struck
With wild astonishment, in silence now
They wait the hour when the self-opened tomb
Shall banish all their fears, and make them happy.
Meantime the soldiers are in arms, the people
Crowd to the altars; wretched Azema,
Trembling and pale, with terror in her looks,
Walks round the tomb, and lifts her hands to heaven;
Whilst Ninias stands astonished in the temple,
Prepared to strike his victim yet unknown:
The gloomy Assur meditates revenge,

Unites the remnants of his scattered party,
And forms some dark design.

SÉMIRAMIS.

I have kept fair
Too long already with him: seize the traitor,
Otanes, bear him to my son in chains;
Ninias shall soon appease eternal justice,
At least with Assur's blood, my vile accomplice.
Ninus, thou seest I am a mother still;
Thou seest my heart, O take it, take it all,
And may it rise a grateful sacrifice!
Ha! who approaches with such hasty steps?
How everything appals my fluttering soul!

SCENE II.

SÉMIRAMIS, AZEMA, OTANES.

AZEMA.

O Queen, forgive me if I come uncalled;
But terrors worse than death have forced me thus
To clasp thy knees, and beg thy royal mercy—

SÉMIRAMIS.

What wouldst thou, princess? speak.

AZEMA.

To snatch a hero
From instant danger, stop a traitor's hand,
And save Arsaces.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Ha! what hand? Arsaces!

AZEMA.

He is thy husband, Azema's betrayed,
He lives for you alone; no matter—

SÉMIRAMIS.

He

My husband! gods!

AZEMA.

The sacred tie that binds you—

SÉMIRAMIS.

The tie is dreadful, impious, and abhorred:
Arsaces is—but speak, go on; I tremble:
What dangers? haste, and tell me.

AZEMA.

Well thou knowest,
Perhaps this very moment, whilst I ask
Thy aid, perhaps—

SÉMIRAMIS.

Well, what?

AZEMA.

That demigod
Whom we adore, demands the sacrifice
Within the dreary labyrinths of the tomb:
What are the crimes Arsaces must atone for
I know not.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Crimes! just heaven!

AZEMA.

But impious Assur
Hath sworn to violate that sacred place
Which mortals dare not enter.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Ay! indeed!
Hath Assur sworn it?

AZEMA.

In the dead of night
The wily traitor had long since secured
A safe retreat, if e'er occasion called,
Within the secret windings of the tomb,
Where now he means to do the bloody deed,
To brave the powers of hell, and wrath of heaven;
With sacrilegious hand he would destroy
The generous Arsaces.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Heaven! what sayest thou?
By what detested means?

AZEMA.

Believe a heart
By love enlightened, and by love inspired:
I know the traitor's rank envenomed hatred,
Marked how the trembling faction by his zeal
Revived; I pried into their secret councils,
Pretended to unite his cause with mine,
And join our interests; I have looked into him,
Have wrested from his heart the fatal secret.
Boldly he marches on, and hopes to pass
Unpunished: well he knows that none dare enter
That holy place, not Oroes himself:
Thither he's gone: meantime his slaves report
Arsaces is the victim that must die
For Babylon, and Ninus in his blood
Shall satiate his revenge: the nobles meet,
The people murmur; Ninus, Assur, heaven,
Are all incensed: I tremble for Arsaces.

SÉMIRAMIS.

My dearest Azema, heaven speaks by thee:
It is enough: I see what must be done.
Repose thyself with safety on a mother;
Daughter, our danger is the same; go thou,
Defend thy husband, I will save my son.

AZEMA.

O heaven!

SÉMIRAMIS.

I meant to wed him, but the gods
In mercy have forbade it: they inspire
A hapless mother now—but time is precious;
Go: leave me here, and in my name command
The nobles, priests, and people, to attend me.

[*Azema goes into the porch of the temple, and Sémiramis advances toward the tomb.*

Thou shade of Ninus, lo! I fly to avenge thee;
The hour is come when thou didst promise me
Admittance to thy tomb; I have obeyed thee,
Called by thy voice, behold me here to save
My son. Ye guards that wait around my throne
Approach: henceforth Arsaces is your king;
No more obedient to Sémiramis,
Observe his laws, to him the sovereign power
I here resign; be you his subject now,
And his defenders.

[*Guards appear, and range themselves on each side at the further part of the stage.*

Gracious heaven! protect me.

[*She goes into the tomb.*

SCENE III.

AZÉMA.

[*Returning from the porch of the temple to the front of the stage.*

What can she purpose? O it is too late
To save him now; I know not what to think:
'Tis wondrous all; O 'tis a dreadful moment,
Arsaces! Ninias! ye immortal powers
Who guide our fate, O say, did you restore
My loved Arsaces but to snatch him from me?

SCENE IV.

AZEMA, NINIAS.

AZEMA.

Ha! Ninias! can it be? Art thou indeed
Great Ninus' son, my sovereign, and my husband?

NINIAS.

O! thou beholdest me, Azema, ashamed
To know myself, sprung from the blood of gods,
And shuddering at the thought: O! Azema,
Remove my terrors, calm my troubled soul,
Strengthen my arm upraised to avenge a father.

AZEMA.

Take heed how thou performest that dreadful office.

NINIAS.

He hath commanded, and I must obey.

AZEMA.

Ninus would never sacrifice his son:
Impossible!

NINIAS.

What says my Azema?

AZEMA.

Ne'er shalt thou enter that abhorred place,
For know, a traitor lies in wait for thee.

NINIAS.

Who shall withhold or terrify Arsaces?

AZEMA.

Thou art the victim to be offered there:
With sacrilegious steps the impious Assur
Profanes the sacred tomb, and rashly dares
To violate its privilege divine:
He waits thee there.

NINIAS.

Good heaven! then all is plain;
I'm satisfied: the victim is prepared;
My father, poisoned by the wicked Assur,
Demands the traitor's blood: instructed thus
By Oroes, and conducted by the gods,
Armed by the hand of Ninus' self, I go
To punish the assassin: thither led
By heaven's eternal justice, my weak hand
Is but the instrument of power divine:
The gods do all, and my astonished soul
Yields to that voice which must decree my fate:
Spite of ourselves, our ways are noted down,
Marked, and determined: prodigies are spread
Around the throne, and spirits called from hell
To wander here: but fearless I obey,
Believe, and trust in heaven.

AZEMA.

Whate'er the gods
Have done but fills my soul with sad dismay:
Ninus was loved by them; yet Ninus perished.

NINIAS.

But now they will avenge him: cease thy plaints.

AZEMA.

Oft have they chose the purest victim, oft
Have shed the blood of innocence.

NINIAS.

No more;
They will defend whom thus they have united:
They by a father's voice exhorted us,
Gave me a throne, a mother, and a wife.
Soon shalt thou see me sprinkled with the blood
Of the vile murderer; from the tomb those gods
Shall lead me to the altar; I obey;
It is enough: the rest be left to heaven.

SCENE V.

AZEMA.

[*Alone.*

O guard his footsteps in this fatal tomb!
Ye powers inscrutable, whose blood must flow
This day? I tremble for the event, and dread
The hand of Assur, long inured to slaughter;
Even on his father's ashes may he shed
The blood of Ninias: O may the dark womb
Of hell receive and swallow up his rage!
Ye lightnings blast him! O illustrious shade
Of Ninus, wherefore wouldst thou not permit

A wretched wife to go with her dear lord?
O guide, support him in this place of darkness!
Did I not hear the voice of Ninias mixed
With deadly groans? O would this sacred tomb,
Which I profane, but open to my wishes
The gate of death!—I will descend:—I go—
Hark! the earth shakes, and dreadful lightnings flash
Athwart the skies: fear, hope, despair—he comes.

SCENE VI.

NINIAS, *a bloody sword in his hand,* AZEMA.

NINIAS.

O heaven! Where am I?

AZEMA.

O! my lord, you're pale,
And bloody, frozen with horror.

NINIAS.

'Tis the blood
Of the vile parricide: I wandered down
Even to the bottom of the tomb; my father
Still led me onward through its winding paths,
He walked before, and pointed out the place
Of my revenge: there, by the imperfect light
That glimmered through the dreary vault, I saw,
Or thought I saw, upraised the murderer's sword:
Methought he trembled; guilt is ever fearful:
Twice did I plunge my sword into his heart,
And with my bloody arm, which rage had strengthened,
Had dragged him in the dust towards the place

Whence the dim rays of light appeared: and yet
I own to thee, his deep heart-rending sighs,
The mournful sounds, imperfect as they were,
That reached my ears, his humble vows to heaven,
With that repentance which in his last hour
Seemed to possess his soul, the hallowed place,
The voice of pity, which, revenge once o'er,
Calls loudly on us, with I know not what
Of dark mysterious terror, shook my soul,
And made me leave the bleeding victim there.
What can this trouble, this strange horror mean
That dwells upon me, Azema? My heart
Is pure, ye gods, my hands are innocent,
Stained only with the blood you bid me shed;
I've served the cause of heaven, and yet am wretched.

AZEMA.

The dead are satisfied, and nature too:
Come let us quit this horrid place, and seek
Thy mother, she shall calm thy troubled mind:
Since Assur is no more———

SCENE VII.

NINIAS, AZEMA, ASSUR.

[*Assur appears at a distance with Otanes, surrounded by guards.*

AZEMA.

O heaven! he's there.

NINIAS.

Assur!

AZEMA.

O haste, ye ministers of heaven,
Ye servants of the king, defend your master.

SCENE VIII.

OROES, *the high priest, with the magi and people assembled,* OTANES, NINIAS, AZEMA, MITRANES,

ASSUR.

[*Disarmed.*

OTANES.

They need not: by the queen's command I've seized
The traitor, who attempted to profane
Yon sacred monument, and enter there:
I shall deliver him to thee.

NINIAS.

Alas!
What victim then hath Ninias sacrificed?

OROES.

Heaven is appeased, and vengeance now complete.
Behold, ye people, your king's murderer.

[*Pointing to Assur.*

Behold, ye people, your king's successor.

[*Pointing to Ninias.*

'Tis Ninias, Babylon's lost prince, restored:
He is your sovereign, know him, and obey.

ASSUR.

Thou Ninias!

OROES.

Ay; 'tis he: the guardian god,
Who saved him from thy rage, hath brought him hither;
That god whose vengeance hath o'erthrown thee.

ASSUR.

Ha! did Sémiramis then give thee life?

NINIAS.

She did, and power withal to punish thee:
Guards take him hence, and rid me of a monster.
He was not worthy of my sword; to fall
By Ninias' hand had been a death too glorious.
The victim hath escaped me; let him die,
Even as he lived, with infamy: away.

ASSUR.

It is my heaviest punishment to see
Ninias my sovereign: but 'tis pleasure still
To leave thee more unhappy than myself;

[*Sémiramis appears at the foot of the tomb, wounded, and almost dead, one of the magi supporting her.*

Look yonder, and behold what thou hast done.

[*Pointing to Sémiramis.*

NINIAS.

Whom have I slain?

AZEMA.

Fly, my dear Ninias, fly
This fatal place.

MITRANES.

What hast thou done?

OROES.

[*Placing himself between Ninias and the tomb.*

Away;
And cleanse those bloody hands: give me the sword,
That fatal instrument of wrath divine.

NINIAS.

No: let me plunge it to my heart.

[*He attempts to destroy himself, the guards interpose.*

OROES.

Disarm him.

SÉMIRAMIS.

[*Brought forward and seated on a sofa.*

Revenge me, O my son; some base assassin
Has slain thy mother.

NINIAS.

O unhappy hour;
Unheard of guilt! for know, that base assassin,
That monster was—thy son: this hand hath pierced
The breast that nourished and supported me:
But soon thou shalt have vengeance, Ninias soon
Shall follow thee.

SÉMIRAMIS.

I went into the tomb
To save thee, Ninias; thy unhappy mother—
But from thy hands, I have received the fate
I merited.

NINIAS.

This last, this fatal stroke,
Sinks deep into my soul: but here I call
Those gods to witness who conducted me,
Those who misled my steps—

SÉMIRAMIS.

No more, my son:
Freely I pardon thee, and only make
This last request, that those dear hands may close
My dying eyes.

[*He kneels.*

A mother begs it of thee:
Thy heart I know was stranger to the deed:
O would that I had been as innocent
When Ninus died! but I have suffered for it.
Henceforth let mortals know, that there are crimes
Offended heaven never can forgive.
O Ninias, Azema, let your blessed union
Blot out my crimes; come near your dying mother;
Give me your hands; long may ye live and reign
In happiness! that hope still gives me comfort,
And mingles joy even with the pangs of death.
It comes, I feel it. O! my children, think
On your Sémiramis, O do not hate
My memory,—O my son, my son—'tis past.

OROES.

Her eyes are sunk in darkness: help the king
And guard his life. Learn from her sad example,
That heaven is witness to our secret crimes:
The higher is the criminal, remember,
The gods inflict the greater punishment;
Kings, tremble on your thrones, and fear their justice.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

CATILINE

SCENE II.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS.

CATILINE.

Well, my Cethegus,
Whilst Rome and our designs are hid in night,
Say, hast thou called together our brave chiefs?

CETHEGUS.

Even here, my lord, beneath this portico,
Safe from the consul's prying eyes, and near
That impious scene where our proud tyrants sit,
Thy friends shall meet—already they have signed
The solemn compact, and are sworn to serve thee.
But how stands Cæsar, will he second us?

CATILINE.

He is a turbulent unruly spirit,
And acts but for himself.

CETHEGUS.

And yet without him
We never shall succeed.

CATILINE.

I've laid a snare
He cannot escape: my soldiers, in his name,
Shall seize Præneste—he's been long suspected.
This will confirm his guilt—the furious consul
Shall soon accuse him to the senate—Cæsar
Will hazard all to satiate his revenge.

I'll rouse this sleeping lion from his den,
And make him roar for me.

CETHEGUS.

But Nonnius still
Rules in Præneste; he's a friend to Rome.
In vain already thou hast tried to tempt
His stubborn virtue—what must be his fate?

CATILINE.

Thou knowest I love his daughter, though I hate
Her surly father: long he strove in vain
To thwart our mutual passion, and prevent
Our private marriage, which at last the churl
Unwillingly consented to: he feared
To incur his angry party's high displeasure
And the proud consul's—but I've made his pride
Subservient to our purpose—he is bound
By solemn oaths to keep our marriage still
A secret: Sura only and Cethegus
Are privy to it: this perhaps may serve
More purposes than one: Aurelia's palace
Conducts us to the temple; there I've placed
My instruments of ruin, arms, and firebrands,
To execute our great design: thy zeal
To friendship much I owe, but more to love.
Beneath the senate's sacred vault, beneath
The roof of Nonnius will we sacrifice
These tyrants—you, my friends, must to Præneste;
You to the capitol; remember whom
You serve, the oath that binds you, and the cause
You are engaged in—thou, my loved Cethegus,
Must watch o'er all, and guide the great machine.

SCENE III.

AURELIA, CATILINE.

AURELIA.

O Catiline, my lord, my husband, ease
My troubled heart, remove my doubts, my fears,
My horror, my despair—alas! what means
This dreadful preparation?—every step
I tread alarms me; why these soldiers, why
With arms and torches is my palace filled?
The days of Marius and of Sulla sure
Are now returned, and discord reigns amongst us:
Explain, my lord, this dreadful mystery:
Do not turn from me—by the sacred tie
That joins our hearts, by the dear babe thou lovest,
I talk not to thee of its mother's danger,
For thee alone I tremble: pity me,
Pity a wretched wife, and tell me all.

CATILINE.

Know then, my life, my fortune, and my fame,
Thy safety, and my own, the common cause,
Demand a conduct which thy fears condemn:
But if thou lovest me, let whate'er thou seest
Be buried in thy breast: I mean to save
Rome's better part; the senate and the people
Are disunited—danger threats the state
On every side; I've taken the best means
To make all well again.

AURELIA.

I hope thou hast;
But can we hide our hearts from those we love?

Canst thou deceive me? yet what thou hast said
Doubles my fears. Alas! thy looks are wild,
And full of horror. What will Nonnius say
When he shall see these dreadful preparations?
The voice of nature, and the tender names
Of father and brother oft have passed
Unheard and unregarded when the cause
Of Rome required it—well thou knowest our marriage
Gave much offence, and when my angry father
Returning, shall behold these sad effects
Of our unhappy union, what, my lord,
Must I expect? O why wilt thou abuse
The power which love has given thee o'er a heart
Devoted to thy service?—thou hast gained
A party, but consider well my father,
Cato, and Cicero, and Rome, and heaven,
Are all thy foes: Nonnius perhaps may come
This very day on purpose to destroy thee.

CATILINE.

Be not afraid, I know he cannot.

AURELIA.

How?

CATILINE.

Whene'er he comes he must approve our purpose:
I am not left at liberty to tell thee
What we design, suffice it that his interest
And mine are one: I know when he shall find
The fair result, he then will join with me
To pull down the proud tyrants he obeys:
Trust me, Aurelia, what I do shall prove
The fertile spring of everlasting glory
And honor to you both—

AURELIA.

Alas! the honor
I fear is doubtful, and the danger certain:
What seekest thou? wherefore wouldst thou urge thy fate?
Is it not enough to rank among the first
Of human kind, and rule the subject world?
Why wouldst thou mount the giddy heights of power,
And court destruction? my foreboding heart
Already sees, and trembles at thy danger.
Are these the promised joys of flattering love?
The peace I hoped for? I have lost it now
For ever: O, my lord, when last these eyes
Were in a short and broken slumber closed,
Methought I saw in flames imperial Rome;
Saw murders, deaths, and rivers stained with blood,
My father massacred in open senate,
And thee, my Catiline, amidst a band
Of vile assassins, breathing forth thy soul
In dreadful agonies: I rose, and fled
From these sad images to find my lord,
My guardian, my protector—thou art here,
And I, alas! am but the more unhappy.

CATILINE.

Away—thy omens fright not Catiline;
Complain not, but be resolute: I want
Thy courage, not thy tears, when I am serving
Thee and my country.

AURELIA.

Is it thus thou meanst
To serve her? O, my lord, I know not what
Thy purpose is, but were it fair and just
Perhaps I might long since have been consulted;

Our mutual interest claimed it from a husband:
If thou dissemblest with me, I have cause
To doubt, and to be wretched—Cicero
Has long suspected thee, and Rome thou knowest
Adores him.

CATILINE.

Whom? my hated rival?

SCENE IV.

CATILINE, AURELIA, MARTIAN.

One of the Conspirators.

MARTIAN.

Sir,
The consul comes this way—by his command
The senate meet; he wishes first to see
And speak with you.

AURELIA.

I tremble at his name.

CATILINE.

Why tremble at the name of Cicero?
Let Nonnius fear and reverence him, disgrace
His rank and character by mean submission;
I pity the weak senator, but hoped
To find in thee a noble soul: not thus,
Remember, acted thy brave ancestors:
Gods! that a woman, and a Roman, sprung
From Nero's blood, should thus be void of pride
Or of ambition! noble minds are ne'er
Without them.

AURELIA.

Mine perhaps thou thinkest is mean
And timid; cruelty alone with thee
Is courage; thy reproach is most unkind;
But know me better; know that this fond wife,
Whom thou contemnest, who has not power to change
Or soften thee, has more of Roman in her
Than thou canst boast; and, coward as she is,
Can teach thee how to die.

CATILINE.

How many cares
At once surround me!—Cicero comes—but him
I fear not: this Aurelia.—

SCENE V.

CICERO, CATILINE, *Chief of the Lictors.*

CICERO.

[*To the Chief Lictor.*

Do as I
Command you—I'll try if I can sound
This faithless heart; leave me alone with him:
Sometimes a villain may be wrought by fear
To better counsel, and renounce his purpose.
Who's there? the proud plebeian, chosen by Rome
To be her master?

[*Turns to Cataline.*

Ere the senate meet,
Catiline, I come for the last time to hold
The friendly torch, and save thy wandering steps
From the dread precipice of guilt and ruin.

CATILINE.

Who, thou?

CICERO.

Yes, I.

CATILINE.

And is it thus thy hate
Pursues me?

CICERO.

Call it pity—but observe me.
The capitol is weary of thy plaints,
Thy factious cries, and bold impertinence;
Rome, and the senate have, it seems, debased
The consul's dignity by choosing me:
Thy pride we know expected it, but how
Hadst thou deserved it? was it by the name,
Or family, thy valor, or the pride
Of a loose prodigal in shows and feasts
And idle pomp; could these entitle thee
To such exalted honors? couldst thou hope
To be the great dispenser of the laws,
To guide the mistress of the world who rules
O'er prostrate kings? had Catiline been what
He ought to be, I might perhaps to him
Have yielded the contested palm.—Hereafter
Thou mayest support the state, but to be consul
'Tis fit thou first shouldst be—a citizen.
Thinkest thou by vile reflections on my birth,
My fortune, and my fame, to taint my honor,
Or weaken the firm basis of my power?
In our corrupted days it is not name,
Or family, that Rome has need of: no:
'Tis virtue; and the pride of Cicero
Hath ever been, that he should nothing owe
To his forefathers—my nobility
Springs from myself, and thine may end in thee.

CATILINE.

It ill becomes a temporary power,
Like thine, to boast of its authority.

CICERO.

Had Cicero used that power as thou deservest,
Thou wouldst not have been here to question it:
Thou who hast stained our altars with pollution
And sacrilegious rage, thy days are numbered
But by thy crimes: thy merit is to dare,
To strike at all, dissemble, and betray:
Thou hast abused the precious gifts that heaven
Bestowed on thee for other purposes:
Sense, beauty, courage, and heroic warmth,
All the fair ornaments of human nature,
In thee are but the instruments of ill.
My voice, which still is raised to scourge the wicked,
And plead for the oppressed, hath spared thee yet;
Nor with the odious Verres ranked the name
Of Catiline; but long impunity
Hath made thee shameless, and insensible
Of all reproof—thou hast betrayed the state:
At Rome, and in Etruria all is discord,
And foul confusion; Umbria is revolted;
Præneste staggers in her faith; the soldiers
Of barbarous Sulla, drenched in blood, come forth
From their dark caves prepared for slaughter, armed
By cruel Mallius; all are leagued with thee;
Thy partisans declared, or secret friends,
All are united in one guilty bond,
And sworn to the destruction of their country:
I know thee for their chief, for I have eyes
On every side, and hands too, thou shalt find,
That, spite of thee, shall vindicate the cause
Of injured Rome; thy guilty friends shall feel

My justice too: thou hast beheld me long
But as thy rival, now behold thy judge,
And thy accuser, who will force thee soon
To answer for thy actions by those laws
Which thou so oft hast trampled on unpunished,
Those laws which thou contemnest, and I revenge.

CATILINE.

I've told you, sir, already, that your office
But ill excuses this indecent freedom:
But for that country's sake, whom both are bound
To serve, I pardon your unjust suspicions;
Nay, I do more, I honor your warm zeal;
Blind though it be, in such a cause 'tis just:
But do not thus reproach me for past errors,
For the wild follies of impetuous youth,
That soon are o'er; your senate is to blame,
I followed their example; pomp and pride,
Excess and luxury, the fruits of conquest,
Are the time's vices, not the native bent
Of Catiline's heart: I served the commonweal
In Asia as a soldier, as a judge
In Africa: spite of our domestic feuds,
Did I not make the name of Rome revered
Among the nations? I who have defended
Shall ne'er betray her.

CICERO.

Sulla too and Marius
Both served their country well, and then destroyed her.
Tyrants have all some specious show of virtue,
And ere they break their country's laws support them.

CATILINE.

If you suspect each brave and gallant soldier,
Let Cæsar, Pompey, Crassus be accused:
Why fix on me amongst so many? why
Am I the only object of your fears?
Have I deserved it?

CICERO.

That you best can tell.
But wherefore deign I thus to answer you?

CATILINE.

The more I plead in my defence, the more
Will Cicero condemn me: if as friend
Thou talkest to me, thou but deceivest thyself,
I am thy foe; if as a citizen,
So too is Catiline; if as a consul,
A consul's not a master, he presides
But in the senate, I defy him there.

CICERO.

Thou durst not; for I there can punish guilt:
If thou art innocent, I will protect thee;
If not, I charge thee, be not seen in Rome.

CATILINE.

This is too much: I will no longer bear
Thy insults, though I scorn thy vague suspicions:
Yet know I think the worst affront that thou
Couldst put on Catiline, would be to protect him.

CICERO.

[*Alone.*

Insolent traitor! means he thus to prove
His innocence by false affected pride?
Perfidious wretch, I'm not to be deceived,
Nor shalt thou thus escape the watchful eye
Of vengeance.

SCENE VI.

CICERO, CATO.

CICERO.

Well, my friend, hast thou prepared
For Rome's defence?

CATO.

Your orders are obeyed;
I have disposed the chiefs, and all are ready
To march as you direct them; but I fear
The people, nay the senate.

CICERO.

Ha! the senate?

CATO.

Ay—they are swollen with pride—and foul division
Will soon enslave them.

CICERO.

Much indeed I fear
Our vices will avenge the conquered world;
Our liberty and virtue are no more;
But Rome may still have hope whilst Cato lives.

CATO.

Alas! who serves his country often serves
A most ungrateful mistress—even thy merit
Offends the senate; with a jealous eye
It views thy greatness.

CICERO.

Cato's approbation
Is recompense enough; thy honest praise

Will more than balance their ingratitude;
On that and on posterity alone
I shall rely; let us perform our duty,
And leave the rest to heaven.

CATO.

How shall we stem
The torrent of corruption? when I see,
Even in this sacred temple, raised to virtue,
Infamous treason rise with shameless front:
Can we suppose that Manlius, that proud rebel,
Would dare advance his standard, and blow up
The flames of civil war, if greater powers
Did not support him, if some secret foe
Abetted not their vile conspiracy?
The leaders of the senate may betray us;
From Sulla's ashes may new tyrants rise:
My just suspicions light on Cæsar.

CICERO.

Mine
On Catiline; perfidious, sordid, rash,
And bold; he loves rebellion, and delights
In novelty; more dangerous than Cæsar;
I know him well; even now I parted from him:
What passed between us but confirms me more
In my suspicions; on his face I read
Rage and resentment, the determined pride
Of his fierce spirit, that no longer deigned
To hide its purpose, but stood forth, and owned
Its enmity to Rome.—I must discover
His bold compeers, perhaps I may prevent
His future crimes, and save my falling country.

CATO.

Catiline has friends, and much I fear the power
Of these united tyrants may prove fatal:

Our forces are in Asia, and at Rome
We are corrupted; but one upright man
May save the state.

CICERO.

If we unite, our country
Has naught to fear—in factions discord soon
Dissolves the tie: Cæsar perhaps may join them;
But, if I know him right, his noble soul
Will never stoop to serve a worthless tyrant;
He loves his country still, and hates a master;
Though soon the time will come when he shall strive
To be one; both are eager for applause,
And both ambitious: both are raised too high
To meet in friendship long; by their division
Rome may be saved; let us not tamely wait
To see our country's ruin, or behold
In shameful chains the masters of mankind.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS.

CETHEGUS.

At length the torch is lit to set on fire
Rome and the subject world; our army's nigh,
And all is ready for the great event.
Knowest thou meantime, my friend, what passes here?

CATILINE.

I know the consul's prudence, so he calls
His cowardice, which deeply ruminates
On future ills: like an unskilful pilot

He sets up every sail for every wind,
But knows not or which way the tempest comes,
Or whither it may drive him—for the senate,
I fear it not; that many-headed monster,
So proud of conquest and nobility,
Looks with an evil eye on Cicero;
I know it hates him, so does Cæsar; Crassus
Would gladly yield him up a sacrifice
To our resentment; on their jealousy
Depend my hopes——he's like a dying man,
With feeble arm he struggles for a while,
But soon shall sink beneath us and expire.

CETHEGUS.

Envy I know attacks him, but his tongue
Can soften all; he leads the captive senate.

CATILINE.

I brave him everywhere; despise his clamors,
And smile at his resentment: let him rail
To his last hour, and triumph in the shouts
Of his admirers, I have other cares
That sit more heavy on me.

CETHEGUS.

What should stop
Thy rapid progress in the paths of glory
And happiness? Canst thou have aught to fear?

CATILINE.

My numerous foes I heed not, 'tis my friends
I have most cause to dread; the jealousy
Of Lentulus, the aspiring soul of Cæsar,
And, above all, my wife.

CETHEGUS.

Shall Catiline
Be frightened at a woman's tears?—for shame,
Leave her to indulge her visionary fears:
I thought thou lovest her as a master should,
And madest her but the servile instrument
Of thy ambition.

CATILINE.

'Tis a dangerous one:
Rome and her child divide with me her love.
Curse on the name of Rome, that even beneath
The roof of Catiline those should dwell who love
Their country! But before the important hour
That must decide our fate, she shall be moved,
She and her son—be that thy care, Cethegus:
Our wives and children must not trouble us
In those distressful moments—but for Cæsar—

CETHEGUS.

What's to be done? if he refuse to join
Our cause, shall we proscribe him; shall the names
Of Cicero and of Cæsar be united?

CATILINE.

Let me consider—to cut Cæsar off—
That were a dreadful sacrifice; methinks
I cannot but admire him, and revere
In him the honor of the Roman name:
But where is Lentulus?

CETHEGUS.

O fear not him;
His pride we know will prompt him to believe
That thou with him wilt share the sovereign power.

CATILINE.

Let him believe it still! the credulous fool!
Thou seest, Cethegus, with what sublety
I'm forced to manage these imperious spirits;
Their rage, resentment, pride and jealousy:
Knowest thou he dares even to be Cæsar's rival?
To keep my friends within the pale of prudence
Will cost me much more trouble than the ruin
Of Cicero and Rome—to guide a party
Is of all tasks the hardest.——

CETHEGUS.

Lentulus
Is here, my lord.

SCENE II.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA.

SURA.

In spite of my remonstrance
You will rely on Cæsar, and confide
In him alone; Præneste's in his power,
And I must yield to him; but know I scorn it,
The blood of Scipio was not made to yield.

CATILINE.

I've joined with Cæsar, but depend not on him;
He may support our cause, or he may hurt it;
I use his name, but 'tis for your advantage.

SURA.

And what is there in Cæsar's name superior
To yours or mine? why must we meanly court
His favor? but because he's Pompey's rival

Rome makes a God of him.—I am thy friend;
Sura and Catiline may defy them all,
And without Cæsar make the world their own.

CATILINE.

We may—thy conduct and approved valor
Have ever been my best and surest hope;
But Cæsar is beloved, respected, feared;
The senate and the people all admire
And court him; statesman, general, magistrate;
In peace revered, and terrible in war;
A thousand ways he charms the multitude;
In short he will be necessary.—

SURA.

Say
Destructive rather—if to-day he shines
Our equal, by to-morrow he will prove
Our rival, and ere long perhaps our master;
Trust me, I know him well, and therefore think
Our party has not a more dangerous foe:
Perhaps his haughty soul may yield to thee,
But play the tyrant o'er the rest; for me,
I cannot, will not, brook it—I've devoted
My honor and my fortunes to thy service;
But I renounce my plighted faith, renounce
Thee and thy cause, if Cæsar is preferred.

CATILINE.

And so thou shalt—I'd sacrifice my life
Rather than e'er permit a haughty rival
To soar above us—Cæsar is our tool,
Our instrument; to-day I flatter him,
To-morrow can bring down his pride, perhaps
Do more—thou knowest our mutual happiness

And interest are my first and dearest care.
[*To Cethegus.*
Away, and let Aurelia be prepared:
Go; or her fond intruding love may ruin
Our deep laid schemes, and mar the great design:
Return some private way and meet me here,
I wait for Cæsar.

SURA.

Nothing's to be done,
I find, without him—but I'll wait the event.

CATILINE.

Farewell: remember I rely on thee
More than on Cæsar.—

CETHEGUS.

I shall execute
Your high command, and gather all our friends
Before the standard of great Catiline.

SCENE III.

CATILINE, CÆSAR.

CATILINE.

Hail, godlike Cæsar, thou whom from the days
Of Sulla I have ranked amongst my best
And dearest friends, whose fortunes I foretold:
Born as thou art to be the first of Romans,
How suits it with thy pride to be the slave
Of a plebeian, who forever thwarts
And braves thee to thy face? I know thou hatest him;
Thy piercing eye observes impatient Rome
Contending for her freedom, will not Cæsar

Assist his country to shake off her chains?
The cause is noble, and the fate of millions
Depends on this important crisis; thou
Wilt join us—lookest thou not with jealous eye
On Pompey still? dost thou not still abhor
The surly Cato? canst thou serve the gods
With half thy wonted zeal when the proud consul
Presides at the altar? will thy noble spirit
Bear these imperious rulers; soft Lucullus,
Sunk in the arms of luxury and sloth;
The greedy Crassus, grasping his large heaps
Of ill-got wealth, enough to purchase Rome
And all her venal sons? on every side
Or faction or corruption reigns; the world
Calls out on Cæsar; wilt thou hear her voice?
Wilt thou redress and save thy falling country?
Will Cæsar listen to his friend?

CÆSAR.

He will;
And if the senate do thee wrong, step forth
To plead thy cause; I never will betray thee;
But ask no more.

CATILINE.

Are these the utmost bounds
Of Cæsar's friendship, but to talk for him?

CÆSAR.

I've weighed the projects, and shall not oppose them;
I may approve, but would not execute.

CATILINE.

I understand you, you are on that side
Which fortune favors, and would stand aloof

To mark the progress of our civil wars,
And raise your fortunes on the common ruin.

CÆSAR.

No—I have nobler views; my hate of Cato,
My jealousy of Pompey, the renown
Of Cicero, conspire to make me wish
I might surpass them all; fair glory calls,
The banks of Seine, the Tagus, and the Rhine;
I pant for honor, and for victory.

CATILINE.

If conquest is thy aim, begin with Rome;
To-morrow we may reign the masters of her.

CÆSAR.

The enterprise is great, perhaps too bold;
But, to be open with thee, though 'tis worthy
Of Catiline, it suits not Cæsar.

CATILINE.

How!

CÆSAR.

I do not choose to serve.

CATILINE.

To share with Cæsar
Were no dishonor to the most ambitious.

CÆSAR.

But power supreme is not to be divided:
I'll not be dragged at Catiline's chariot wheels
To grace his triumph: as a friend I love thee;
But know that friend shall never be—my master:
Even Pompey shall not—Sulla, whom thy valor
Hath nobly followed in the race of glory,
Whose courage I admire, whose lawless rage

I ever shall abhor, enslaved proud Rome:
But he deserved the glorious prize, subdued
The Hellespont, and made Euphrates tremble:
Asia was conquered: Mithridates owned
His martial genius—but what noble deeds
Hast thou to boast? what kings hast thou subdued?
What seas has Catiline passed, what lands explored?
Thou hast the seeds of greatness in thy nature;
But to enslave thy country is above
Thy present powers, above the powers of Cæsar:
We have not strength, authority or name
For such an enterprise. Rome soon must fall:
But ere I will attempt to be her master,
I will extend her empire and her glory;
And if I forge my country's chains, at least
Will cover them with laurels.

CATILINE.

Mine, perhaps,
Is, after all, the shortest path to glory:
How did your boasted Sulla rise to empire?
He had an army, so has Catiline;
Raised by myself alone, and not, like his,
The gift of fortune; he observed with care
The favorable hour, and well improved it:
I have done more; have made the times and seasons
Subservient to me. Sulla was a king.
Wouldst thou be one? wilt thou be Cicero's slave,
Or rule with Catiline?

CÆSAR.

Neither. To be free,
For I no longer will dissemble with you,
I esteem Cicero; but love him not,
Nor fear him: though I love, I dread not thee.

Divide the senate if thou canst, pull down
The proud oppressors; thou hast my consent;
But hope no more, nor dare to think that Cæsar
Will ever be thy slave: I'll keep thy secret,
And be thy friend or foe, as thou deservest it.

SCENE IV.

CATILINE.

If he supports us not, even let him fall
The victim of his folly: Sulla knew
And would have cut him off, but Sulla dared not:
I know he is my secret enemy,
As such I shall beware of him.

SCENE V.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA.

SURA.

What says
The mighty Cæsar? is he friend or foe?

CATILINE.

His barren friendship only offers me
A feeble aid; but we can do without him:
Perhaps he may repent it; and meantime
We've better pillars to support the fabric.
Behold, the heroes come.

SCENE VI.

CATILINE, THE CONSPIRATORS.

CATILINE.

Hail, bold Statilius,
Valiant Autronius, noble Piso, hail,
Vargontes, and the rest of my brave friends,
The first of men, the conquerors of kings,
The great avengers of a world oppressed,
This seat of empire soon shall be your own:
The vanquished nations, which your valor gained,
Were ravished from you by usurping tyrants;
For the proud senate still your blood hath flowed;
For them Tigranes, Mithridates fell;
For them alone; and all your poor reward
Was but to stand at distance, and adore
Your haughty masters; but at length the hour
Of vengeance is approaching: be prepared
For no inglorious enterprise: I know
Your souls would scorn a victory cheaply bought;
But I will bring you noble conquests, full
Of danger and of glory: seize, my friends,
The golden opportunity: already
I see your foes expiring at your feet.
Rush on your prey, burn, plunder, and destroy;
But, above all, let union guide your counsels:
Even now Prænestе falls: the brave remains
Of Sulla's scattered forces march towards us:
I shall command them, and Rome must be yours
Petreius vanquished, I shall clear my way
Even to the capitol: then you, my friends,
Shall rise to empire, to a throne disgraced

By worthless Romans, and by you restored
To its true lustre: Curius and his band
Will open me the gates; but tell me, friend,
The gladiatorian cohorts, where are they?
Will those brave veterans join our cause?

LENTULUS-SURA.

They will:
Myself shall lead them in the dead of night,
And arm them in this secret place.

CATILINE.

Mount Cælius—
Is that secured?

STATILIUS.

I've bribed the sentinels,
And all is safe.

CATILINE.

You to mount Aventine
Repair, and soon as Mallius shall display
His colors, light your torches, spread destruction
On every side; let the proscribed perish.
Let Cicero—ye have sworn it—be my first
My darling victim: Cæsar too must die,
And Cato; these removed, the senate soon
Will tremble and obey: already fortune
Declares for us, and blinds them to their ruin:
Within their walls, and almost in their sight
We lay the snares of death, and mark them out
For sacrifice: remember not to take up arms
Before the appointed time: we must surprise
Ere we destroy: let Cicero and Rome
Perish together, and the lightning blast
Before the thunder's threatening voice alarms them.
Call not this deed a foul conspiracy;
'Tis a just war declared against the foes

Of Rome and all mankind; reclaim your rights,
The empire of the world, which base usurpers
Had ravished from you.

[*To Cethegus and Lentulus-Sura.*

Haste, ye gallant leaders,
Haste to the senate; see your victims there:
Hear your proud consul roar; 'tis the last time
That he shall triumph there—now, worthy Romans,
Swear by this sword, that with the blood of tyrants
Shall soon be stained, to perish, or to conquer,
With Catiline.

MARTIAN.

By thee and by this sword
We swear with thee to perish or to conquer.

ANOTHER CONSPIRATOR.

Perish the senate! perish all who serve,
All who defend them! if there be amongst us
A traitor, let him die.

CATILINE.

Away, this night
Will finish all, and Rome shall be our own.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, MARTIAN, SEPTIMUS.

CATILINE.

Are all things ready? do our troops advance?

MARTIAN.

Even so, my lord; the faithful Mallius comes
Prepared to circle these devoted walls;

Our friends impatient brook not dull delay,
But urge each other to the bloody scene;
We wait but thy command; appoint the hour
When Rome must fall.

CATILINE.

Soon as I quit the senate
Begin the sacrifice: let this great day
Be sacred to destruction: but meantime
Take special care the consul's busy friends
Do not observe our motions.

CETHEGUS.

Were it not
Most prudent to destroy him in the senate?
He has alarmed the people, and foresees
Our every action.

CATILINE.

Knows he the revolt
Of Mallius? knows he Catiline's deep designs?
Knows he an army is approaching for me?
Fear not, my friends, ours is no common cause,
'Tis fit the means should be proportioned to it:
When vulgar mortals, grovelling and obscure,
Form ill-digested schemes, and idle plans
Of future greatness, if one slender wheel
Is broke, it overthrows the whole machine:
But souls like ours, a firm and chosen band,
Plans deeply laid, the conquerors of kings,
The sons of Mars, united to support
And raise each other, these must be superior
To Cicero's art, or Cicero's vigilance:
We've naught to fear.

CETHEGUS.

But is Præneste ours
In Cæsar's name?

CATILINE.

Ay; that was my first stroke
Of policy: the unsuspecting senate
Will be deceived: I've whispered it abroad,
That Nonnius hath conspired against the state,
And half our credulous fools believe the tale.
Ere he can clear his innocence, my army
Will be in Rome, and all secured: away,
Remove Aurelia: let no little cares
Intrude to stop or hurt the great design.

SCENE II.

AURELIA, CATILINE, CETHEGUS, ETC.

AURELIA.

[*A letter in her hand.*

There, Catiline, read Aurelia's fate and thine,
Thy crime and thy just sentence.

CATILINE.

What rash hand—
Ha! 'tis thy father's.

AURELIA.

Read it.

CATILINE.

[*Reads the letter.*

"Death too long
Hath spared me, and the child I loved too well
Must finish my sad days: at length I suffer

For my own follies, and that hapless marriage
Which I consented to; I know the plots
Of thy vile husband: Cæsar has betrayed us,
And would have seized Præneste: thou partakest
The treason: but repent, or perish with them."
But how could Nonnius e'er discover that
Which even the consul knows not?

CETHEGUS.

This may prove
Our ruin.

CATILINE.

[*To Cethegus.*
It may turn to our advantage.
Aurelia, I must tell thee all: this day
The world is armed in Catiline's defence:
Say, in the hour of danger wilt thou serve
A father, or a husband?

AURELIA.

To be silent,
And trouble thee no more, were the commands
Which Catiline laid on his neglected wife,
Spite of her fond entreaties, prayers, and tears:
What hast thou further to desire?

CATILINE.

Away:
This moment, send that letter to the consul;
I have my reasons; I would have him know,
That Cæsar is as much to be suspected
As I am: he's accused, and Catiline not
So much as named: it is as I could wish.
Take with thee our loved infant, and return not
To bleeding Rome, till I am master there:
Then thou shalt reign with me: our marriage yet

Is kept a secret: I'll not have it known,
'Till at the head of our victorious army
I shall proclaim it loud to Italy,
And to the world: then shall thy haughty father,
As our first subject, humbly bend before thee,
And sue to be forgiven: begone, Aurelia,
And leave me to my fate. I would not wish
Thou shouldst partake my dangers or my cares:
This night prepare to meet a conqueror.

AURELIA.

O Catiline, meanest thou to destroy thy country?
Is this the day appointed for destruction?

CATILINE.

To-day I purpose to chastise my foes;
All is prepared.

AURELIA.

Begin then with Aurelia;
For I had rather perish by thy hand,
Than live to share thy guilt.

CATILINE.

O let the tie
That binds us—

CETHEGUS.

Drive not thus to desperation
A husband and a friend, who trusts his all
To thee; thou art entered in the paths of glory,
And to retreat were fatal.

AURELIA.

Misery
And sure destruction were Aurelia's fate:

From that unhappy moment, when by thee
And thy vile counsels led, I gave my hand
To Catiline; despised, neglected, long
Have I beheld, with eyes of detestation,
Your horrid plots: spite of myself you made me
A vile accomplice; but you know I loved,
And basely have imposed upon my weakness:
I blush to think how grossly you abused
A woman's fond credulity; but know
I'll no longer be guilty of a crime
Which I abhor: no longer serve a tyrant:
No, I renounce my vows, my faith to thee;
These hands shall rise against thee, thou vile traitor:
Henceforth I am thy foe. Strike, Catiline, strike;
Destroy me; carry into burning Rome,
For thy first victim, an expiring wife
Slain by thy hand; destroy the hapless infant,
Sad pledge of our detested nuptials: then,
Barbarian as thou art, complete thy guilt,
And in the blood of millions glut thy vengeance.

CATILINE.

And is the gentle, kind Aurelia then
Amongst my foes? thus in the noblest war,
That e'er was waged for freedom and for empire,
When Pompey, Cæsar, Cato, are subdued,
My worst of enemies at last are found
In my own house; I am deserted there
For an unworthy father: threatened too.

AURELIA.

I threaten guilt, and tremble for—a husband:
Even in my rage thou seest my tenderness;
Abuse it not, it is my only weakness:
But I would have thee fear—

CATILINE.

That word, Aurelia,
Was never made for Catiline—but hear me:
I love thee; yet presume not on thy power,
Nor think I e'er will sacrifice my friends,
My noble cause, my interest, and my fame,
Glory and empire: no, it is enough
If I forgive and pity thee, but know—

AURELIA.

The crown thy pride looks up to I despise:
I should behold it as the shameful mark
Of infamy: thou showest thy love for me
By pity and forgiveness; and I mine,
By holding back, if possible, thy hand
From guilt and error—therefore will I go—

SCENE III.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA, AURELIA, ETC.

LENTULUS-SURA.

We are discovered, lost, undone; our friends
Betrayed, our plots unravelled all; Præneste
Not yielded to us; Nonnius is in Rome;
One of our spies is seized, and has confessed;
Nonnius in open senate will accuse
His son-in-law; he's gone to Cicero,
Who knows too much already.

AURELIA.

Now behold
The fruits of guilt, and all thy great designs,
Thy boasted fortunes, empire, and the throne,
Which I despised: are thy eyes opened yet?

CATILINE.

[*After a long pause.*

This is a blow I thought not of; but say,
Wilt thou betray me?

AURELIA.

'Tis what thou deservest:
My country claims, and heaven demands it of me;
But I'll do more, I'll save both Rome and thee;
And though I have not all thy rage, may boast
Some of thy courage; love will make me brave:
Long since I saw thy danger, Catiline:
'Tis come, and now I will partake it with thee;
I'll see my father, and obtain thy life,
Or lose my own; I know he is forgiving,
Gentle, and mild: I know he loves Aurelia,
And will not urge too far a foe like thee,
Desperate and brave; I'll talk to Cicero
Who fears, and to the senate who adores thee;
They will be glad to think thee innocent;
Those whom we fear we readily forgive:
But let sincerest penitence atone
For thy past crimes: convicted guilt by that,
And that alone, can hope for pardon; though
I know it hurts thy pride, it must be done:
At least I hope I shall procure thee time,
Or to quit Rome, or to defend thyself:
I'll not reproach thee; even when most guilty
I loved, and in misfortune will not leave thee;
But rather die to save thy life and glory.
Farewell; let Catiline learn henceforth to trust me;
I have deserved it.

CATILINE.

Sad alternative;
It is most dreadful—but I yield to thee:

Remember that a husband's plea is stronger,
Much stronger than a father's: if I err,
The crime is thine.

AURELIA.

I'll take it all upon me;
Nay, even thy hatred, if it must be so;
I act for thee, and I'm satisfied.
Daughter, and wife, and Roman, every duty
Shall be performed; remember thine, and keep
Thy heart as pure and spotless as Aurelia's.

SCENE IV.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA, FREEDMEN.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Is this the bold and fearless Catiline,
Or Nonnius' timid son; a woman's slave;
Appalled by phantoms? how thy great soul shrunk
Soon as Aurelia spoke!

CETHEGUS.

It cannot be;
Catiline will never change; his noble soul
By opposition grows but more resolved:
Præneste lost, the senate our accusers,
We may be conquerors still, and make them tremble
Whilst they condemn us; we have noble friends,
And will deserve them.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Ere the signal's given
We may be seized; thou knowest at dead of night,
Just as the senate part, we had agreed

To execute our purpose: what, my friends,
Must be resolved on?

CETHEGUS.

[*To Catiline.*

Catiline, thou art silent,
And tremblest too.

CATILINE.

I tremble at the blow
Which I shall strike; my fate demands it of me.

LENTULUS-SURA.

I've no dependence on Aurelia: all
That we can hope for is to sell our lives
As dearly as we can.

CATILINE.

I count the moments,
And weigh each circumstance; Aurelia's tears
And flattery will a while suspend our fate;
Cicero on other business is detained,
And all is safe; let me have arms and men,
No matter who they are, or slaves or free,
Assassins, robbers, if they will but fight,
We'll have them: thou brave Septimus, and thou
My dearest Martian, whose approved zeal
I shall depend on, must observe Aurelia;
And Nonnius; when they're parted, talk to him
About his daughter; tell him of her danger,
Draw him by artful means to the dark path
That leads to the Tiber, seize the lucky moment,
And hurl him—ha! who's this?

SCENE V.

CICERO, CATILINE, CETHEGUS, ETC.

CICERO.

Audacious traitor,
Where art thou going? speak, Cethegus, who
Assembled you?

CATILINE.

We'll tell thee in the senate.

CETHEGUS.

There we shall see if thou art authorized
Thus to pursue us.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Or what right
The son of Tullius has to question us.

CICERO.

At least I have a right to ask of these,
Who brought them here: these are not like yourselves,
Of senatorial rank; away with them.
To prison.

CATILINE.

Darest thou thus on mere suspicion
Confine a Roman; where's our liberty?

CICERO.

They are of thy council, that's sufficient cause;
Tremble, thyself; lictors, obey.

[*The lictors carry off Septimus and Martian.*

CATILINE.

'Tis well:
Go on, proud consul, and abuse thy power,
The time will come when thou shalt answer for it.

CICERO.

Instant I will examine them, hereafter
Thus may I treat their masters; Nonnius knows
All thy designs, Prænestе's mine, and Rome
Prepared for her defence; we soon shall see
Which most prevails, or Catiline's artifice
Or Cicero's vigilance: I do not preach
Repentance and forgiveness to thee; no,
I talk of punishment, thou mayest expect it:
Come to the senate; follow if thou darest.

SCENE VI.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA.

CETHEGUS.

Must we at last then bend to Cicero,
And own his hated power?

CATILINE.

To the last hour
I will defy him: still his curious soul
Pries into all, but can discover nothing:
Our friends will only lead him more astray,
By holding out false lights that will misguide
His wandering footsteps: in that fatal scroll
Cæsar's accused; the senate is divided,
And Manlius with his army's at the gate:
You think that all is lost, but follow me,
And mark the event; we shall be conquerors still.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Nonnius, I fear, will make it all too plain.

CATILINE.

But he and Cicero shall never meet;
Depend on that; away, address the senate
With confidence, and leave the rest to me:
But whither am I going?

CETHEGUS.

Ha!

CATILINE.

Aurelia!
O gods! what shall I do with that proud heart?
Remove her from me: if I see my wife,
Bold as I am, I shall relapse: away.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Scene represents the place prepared for the reception of the Senate, with part of the gallery leading from Aurelia's palace to the temple of Tellus; a double row of benches in a circular form, with a raised seat for Cicero in the middle of it.

CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA.

LENTULUS-SURA.

These reverend fathers are exceeding slow,
I thought ere this they would have met; perhaps
Uncertain yet, and trembling for their fate,
They know not how to act.

CETHEGUS.

The oracle
Of Rome, (for so he deems himself,) engaged
In a continued round of toil, is busied
In questioning his prisoner Septimus,
Who will perplex him more; 'tis that retards
Their meeting.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Would to heaven that we already
Had taken up arms! I own I dread the senate.
That reverence and attachment to the state,
That sacred name of country, which awakes
The sense of honor in each patriot breast;
I like it not.

CETHEGUS.

'Tis nothing but a name,
A word without a meaning; in the days
Of our forefathers men respected it.
Save a few stubborn stoics, none retain
The memory of it; Cicero has raised
Suspicions only; Cato's credit's lost;
Cæsar is for us, what have we to fear?
Defend yourselves, and Rome will be your own.

LENTULUS-SURA.

But what if Catiline, by an artful wife
Seduced, at last should leave us; we have all
Our weaknesses, and well thou knowest Aurelia
Can lead him as she lists; he loves, esteems,
And may be ruled by her.

CETHEGUS.

His love will yield
To his ambition.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Thou beheldest him tremble.
In short, my friend, when tender ties like these—

CETHEGUS.

[*Taking him aside.*

Cato approaches, let us listen to him.

[*Lentulus-Sura and Cethegus sit down at one corner of the Senate-house.*

SCENE II.

CATO *enters the Senate with* LUCULLUS, CRASSUS, FAVONIUS, CLODIUS, MURENA, CÆSAR, CATULLUS, MARCELLUS, ETC.

CATO.

[*Observing the two conspirators.*

Lucullus, mark those dangerous men; behold them
In secret conference; see, the blush of guilt
Glows on their cheeks at sight of me; already
Treason with bold and shameless front stalks forth
Amongst us, and the senate still dissemble
Their knowledge of it; Sulla's demon sure
Hath breathed its baneful influence o'er the souls
Of our blind rulers.

CETHEGUS.

Cato, thy rash censure
May cost thee dear.

CATO.

[*Sits down, the other senators take their places.*

The gods of Rome sometimes
Permit a traitor's crimes to pass unpunished;

They crushed our ancestors beneath the yoke
Of cruel tyrants; shall imperial Rome,
The mistress of the world, again submit
To slavery? no: the guilt she spared in Sulla,
In Catiline and Cethegus she may punish.

CÆSAR.

Cato, what meanest thou? thy outrageous virtue
Can serve no purpose but to make thee foes.

CATO.

[*To Cæsar.*

Cæsar is still the factious leader's friend,
The patron of corruption, and preserves
A soul unmoved whate'er his country suffers.

CÆSAR.

When danger calls, my country will not say
I am too calm, therefore complain not, Cato.

CATO.

I must complain, must weep the fate of Rome,
Deserted and betrayed: now where is Pompey?
Would he were here to save us!

CÆSAR.

Why not call
On Cæsar?

CATO.

Pompey loves his country.

CÆSAR.

That
Would I dispute with him.

SCENE III.

CICERO.

[*Entering with precipitation, the senators rise.*

Why waste ye thus in idle altercation,
The precious time when Rome is on the brink
Of ruin, whilst on you she calls for succor,
When the dread signal is already given?
Already is this land of freedom stained
With senatorial blood.

LUCULLUS.

O heavens!

CATO.

What sayest thou?

CICERO.

The equestrian cohort, formed by my command,
Were posted where they best might quell the foe;
Nonnius, my friend, that generous old man,
Who, amidst the crimes of this degenerate age,
Still uncorrupted, from Prænestе came,
To guide us through this labyrinth of treason,
And lead our wandering steps to peace and safety,
When lo! two bloody ruffians rushed upon him,
And plunged their daggers in his faithful heart:
He fell: confusion followed, and wild uproar
Amongst the people: we pursued the traitors,
Spite of the multitude that thronged around them,
And night's dark shade to favor their escape:
One I have seized, and bound in chains; already
He has confessed that Catiline set him on.

SCENE IV.

CATILINE.

[*Standing up between Cato and Cæsar, Cethegus next to Cæsar, the Senate seated.*

Yes, reverend fathers, know, the deed was mine;
I slew your foes; 'twas Catiline who revenged
His injured country, and destroyed a traitor.

CICERO.

Barbarian, thou?

CATO.

And darest thou boast of it?

CÆSAR.

Remember, fathers, we've no right to punish
Before we hear him.

CETHEGUS.

Speak, defend thyself,
And triumph o'er the malice of thy foes.

CICERO.

Romans, where are we?

CATILINE.

Amidst evil days
And evil men, the horrors of foul discord
And civil war; amidst determined foes,
Whom I alone must conquer; Sulla's spirit
Inspires once more the haughty sons of Rome:
With grief I see expiring liberty,
With grief behold this reverend senate torn

By discord, horrors spread on every side,
And Cicero pouring in the senate's ear
Unjust suspicions: Cicero talks for Rome,
But I avenge her: I have shown her cause
Is dearer far to me than e'er it was
To your proud consul. Nonnius was the soul,
The leader of this foul conspiracy:
It was a dangerous crisis; I stepped forth
And saved you all: thus by a soldier fell
The daring Spurius; thus was Gracchus slain
By the brave Scipio: who shall punish me
For acting like a Roman? which of you
Will dare accuse me?

CICERO.

I, who know thy crime;
I, who can prove it—bring those freedmen here,
Let them be heard. Fathers, behold the man
Who has destroyed a senator of Rome:
Will ye permit him thus to speak, to boast
Of his foul deed, and call his crime a virtue?

CATILINE.

And will ye, Romans, let this vile accuser
Thus persecute your fellow-citizens,
Your best, your noblest friends? but know from me
What Cicero could not tell you, and improve
The important secret to your best advantage:
In his own palace, know, this impious man,
This vile betrayer, Nonnius, had concealed
Arms, torches, all the instruments of death
Designed for our destruction: if Rome lives,
She lives by me, and to this arm you owe
Your safety: send and seize them, and then say
What's due to Catiline from his thankless country.

CICERO.

[*To the lictors.*

Go you to the palace, bring with you the daughter
Of Nonnius—ha! thou tremblest.

CATILINE.

I? 'tis false:
Know, I despise this mean, this last resource
Of disappointed malice—fathers, say,
Have I not cleared myself? are you convinced!

CICERO.

I am, that thou art guilty: can ye think
That good old man was ever capable
Of such detested fraud? it was thy art,
Thy cunning, miscreant, to conceal from me
Thy treachery; therefore didst thou choose the palace
Of Nonnius to secrete thy instruments
Of vengeance; there thou wouldst have hid thy guilt:
Perhaps thou hast seduced his wretched daughter:
Alas! his family is not the first
Where thou hast carried sorrows, crimes, and death;
And now thou wouldst destroy thy country too;
Yet boldly darest, instead of punishment,
To call for approbation and reward.
O thou abandoned traitor, murderer,
Reviler, hypocrite; such titles suit
Thy boasted services. O you, who once
Stood forth the happy patrons of mankind,
The sovereign judges of the world, at length
Will you submit, to let a tyrant hold
Dominion o'er you, will you shut your eyes
And rush into the precipice? awake,

Revenge yourselves, or you partake his guilt:
This day or Rome or Catiline must perish:
Lose not a moment therefore, but determine:

CÆSAR.

Judgments too quickly made are oft unjust:
This is the cause of Rome, and therefore merits
Our strict attention: when our equals lag
Beneath the stroke of censure, we should act
With caution, and in them respect ourselves:
Too much severity suits none but tyrants.

CATO.

Too much indulgence here suits none but traitors.
What! balance 'twixt a murderer and Rome!
Is it not Cicero speaks, and shall we doubt?

CÆSAR.

These are suspicions only; give us proof:
The arms once found, and Nonnius' guilt confirmed,
Catiline deserves our praise.
[*Turning to Catiline.*
Thou knowest I'll keep
My word with thee in all things.

CICERO.

O my country!
O Rome! O gods! thus shall a hero plead
A traitor's cause; art thou the senate's friend,
And canst be Catiline's? henceforth Rome has naught
To fear but from her own ungrateful sons.

CLODIUS.

Rome is in safety; Cæsar loves his country,
And we should think with him.

CICERO.

It well becomes
A man like Clodius to unite with those
Who plan destruction, and delight in ruin:
But whereso'er I turn my eyes, they meet
With bold conspirators, or citizens
Cold and inactive in the cause of Rome:
Catiline, without or fear or danger, drives
The storm upon us; he proscribes the senate;
Already reaps in thought the bloody harvest;
Marks out his victims, threatens, and commands;
And when I point out the dread consequence,
Then Cæsar talks of senatorial rights,
And Clodius joins him: Cicero must be dumb:
Catiline has murdered Nonnius; he who takes
Another's life should lose his own; no rights,
No laws should plead for him: the first great care
Is to defend our country; but, alas!
That country is no more.

SCENE V.

THE SENATE, AURELIA.

AURELIA.

Ye great avengers
Of innocence oppressed, my only hope,
And thou, O consul, virtue's kind protector,
To thee my murdered father calls for vengeance:
O let me wash thy feet with tears—assist,

[*She falls at Cicero's feet; he raises her up.*

Avenge me: tell me, if thou canst, who slew
My father.

CICERO.

There he stands.

[*Pointing to Catiline.*

AURELIA.

O gods!

CICERO.

'Twas he
Who did the deed, and boasts of it.

AURELIA.

Good heaven!
Can it be Catiline? did I hear aright?
O bloody monster, didst thou murder him?

[*The Lictors support her.*

CATILINE.

[*Turning to Cethegus, and fainting in his arms.*
This is a dreadful sight—support me—this
Is punishment enough.

CETHEGUS.

Why droops my friend?
Aurelia calls for vengeance: but if Catiline
Has served his country, what has he to fear?

CATILINE.

[*Turning to Aurelia.*

Aurelia, 'tis too true—my cruel duty—
My country—think me not so base; Aurelia
Thou knowest my love, my tenderness—but ties
Of a more sacred nature, ties—

SCENE VI.

THE SENATE, AURELIA, CHIEF OF THE LICTORS.

CHIEF OF THE LICTORS.

My lord,
We've seized these arms.

CICERO.

At Nonnius's?

CHIEF LICTOR.

His house
Was the receptacle of all: our prisoners
Accuse him as the chief conspirator.

AURELIA.

Malice and calumny! the lying slaves
First take his life, and then destroy his fame:
The wretch whose murderous hand—

CICERO.

Go on—

AURELIA.

Just gods,
For what have ye reserved me?

CICERO.

Speak: let truth
In open day appear: but at the sight
Of him you tremble; your dejected eyes,
And sudden silence, show how much you dread
The tyrant.

AURELIA.

I have been to blame; Aurelia
Alone is guilty.

CATILINE.

No; thou art not.

AURELIA.

Hence,
Detested monster, I abhor thy pity,
Disclaim all converse, all relation with thee:
Alas! too late, I see my guilt; too late
Confess my crimes; yes, reverend fathers; yes,
Aurelia knew the traitor, and concealed him:
I asked for aid, but merit punishment;
My weakness may be fatal; Rome's in danger;
The world this day may be subverted: thou,
Thou traitor, ledst me to the dark abyss
Of infamy; thou madest my tenderness
Subservient to thy wicked purposes;
Curse on the guilty hour that gave my heart
To Catiline; to thee I have been faithful,
But false to heaven, and to my country; false
To my unhappy father: I betrayed,
And I destroyed him.

[*Whilst Aurelia is speaking, Cicero seems deeply affected.*

Ye avenging gods,
Ye sacred walls, and thou much injured spirit
Of my dear father, Romans, senators,
Behold my husband, your inveterate foe.

[*Turning to Catiline.*

Now, miscreant, mark, and imitate Aurelia.

[*Stabs herself.*

CATILINE.

O wretched Catiline!

CATO.

O dreadful day!

CICERO.

[*Rising.*

'Tis worthy of this guilty age.

AURELIA.

O consul!
There was a letter sent you—murder threatens
On every side—take heed—alas!—I die.

[*Aurelia is carried off.*

CICERO.

Let her have needful succor: Aufidus,
Search for that paper—still are ye in doubt;
Still will ye suffer this vile murderer
To lord it o'er the senate, shall the deaths
Of Nonnius and Aurelia pass unpunished?

CATILINE.

The guilt was thine: thy rancor and fell hatred
Of Catiline urged him to the deed; ambition
Inspired us both; thy happier fortune soared
Above me, thou hast been the cause of all:
I hate thee, Cicero, hate Rome itself
For loving thee: long have I sought thy ruin,
And I will seek it still: the wrongs I suffer
Shall be revenged on thee; thy blood shall pay
For mine; inconstant Rome, that now adores thee,
Shall one day see with joy the mangled limbs
Of her proud consul scattered o'er the senate:
Remember Catiline has foretold thy fate;
I hasten to accomplish it: farewell.

CICERO.

Guards, seize the traitor.

CETHEGUS.

Let them if they dare.

LENTULUS-SURA.

The senate is divided: we defy thee.

CATILINE.

The war then is declared: friends, follow me,
We must to battle: the uncertain senate
Will think on't, and determine at their leisure.

[*He goes out with some senators of his party.*

CICERO.

Now, ye illustrious conquerors of the world,
Which will ye choose, or slavery or empire:
Where is the freedom, where the majesty
Of ancient Rome? where is her lustre now?
'Tis faded all: awake, my slumbering country;
Lucullus, Cæsar, and Murena, listen;
O listen to the voice of Rome; she calls
Aloud for help, demands some gallant leader
To fight for her; equality of rank
Must be reserved for happier times, the Gauls
Are here, Camillus must be found, we want
A chief, a warrior, a dictator; now
Name the most worthy, and I'll follow him.

SCENE VII.

THE SENATE, CHIEF LICTOR.

CHIEF LICTOR.

My lord, I found this letter to Aurelia
From Nonnius: all our cares for her were vain.

CICERO.

[*Reading the letter.*

More dangers threatening! "Cæsar, who betrays us,
Would seize Præneste," ha!

[*Turning to Cæsar.*

Art thou too, Cæsar,
A vile accomplice? this completes our woes;
And wilt thou bend beneath a tyrant?—read it.

CÆSAR.

I have: I am a Roman, ruin comes
Upon us, danger is on every side;
'Tis well: I must be gone: you have my answer.

CATO.

It was a doubtful one: most certainly
He is their friend.

CICERO.

Away: let us defend
The state against them all: O Senators!
If Nonnius' death, if poor Aurelia's pangs,
If bleeding Rome, if a subverted world
Have power to stir up your resentment, rise,
Fly to the capitol, defend your gods,
Defend your country, punish Catiline.
I'll not reproach you; though 'twas most unkind,
To spurn at Cicero, and embrace a villain.
But to avoid a tyrant, name your chief:
You, who are friends to virtue, separate
From traitors.

[*The Senators separate themselves from Cethegus and Lentulus-Sura.*

Now let us unite, my friends,
Never let quarrels, jealousies, and strife,

Divide us; 'twas by them that Sulla triumphed.
For me, wherever danger calls, I go
Intrepid and inflexible: O gods!
Strengthen this arm, and animate this voice:
O grant me still to save ungrateful Rome!

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

CATO, *with part of the senate in arms.*

CLODIUS.

[*To Cato.*

What! whilst the senate armed for its own safety
From busy faction's power can scarce preserve
These sacred walls; thus shall a proud plebeian
Insult us? shall a people, born to freedom,
Be treated like dependent slaves? by him,
Shall Rome's best friends, the conquerors of the world,
Be put in chains? because he is a consul,
Shall he condemn his masters? Catiline's self
Were less despotic, and less dangerous:
With you I feel my country's wretchedness,
And weep her fate; but cannot, will not, see
The senate thus disgraced.

CATO.

Disgrace attends
On those alone who merit it—but know,
The blood of nobles, your patrician friends,
Debased by guilt, should rank below the meanest;
Those who betrayed us are condemned to death:

Cicero condemned them; he who saved your country,
The glorious consul, whom ye dare accuse,
Because he loved you but too well: yet fear
And tremble all, ungrateful as ye are
To join with traitors, for an equal fate
Shall soon o'erwhelm you; Catiline's at our gates.
What Cæsar hath determined yet we know not;
Whether he means to save, or to destroy
His country: Cicero bravely acts alone,
And hazards all for Rome, whilst you despise
Your best of friends, and treat him as a foe.

CLODIUS.

Cato has more severity than courage,
And ever rigorous, hates not guilt so much
As he loves punishment: reproach us not,
Nor act the censor when we want a friend.
Whilst the destructive flames of war surround,
'Tis not a consul's edict can defend us.
What can your lictor and his fasces do,
Against a band of fierce conspirators?
You talk of dangers, and of Cæsar's power:
Who does not know that Cæsar is the friend
Of Catiline? you have pointed out the ills
That threaten Rome; it were a nobler task
To show us how we may remove them.

CATO.

Yes;
And so I will: I would advise the senate
To be aware of Cæsar, and of—thee;
Nay, more—but see our father comes.

SCENE II.

CICERO, CATO, *part of the senate.*

CATO.

[*To Cicero.*
Behold
Great Cicero, the sons of thankless Rome:
Approach and save us; envy's self shall soon
Fall at thy feet, in humble admiration
Of such transcendent virtue.

CICERO.

Friends and Romans,
The love of glory is my ruling passion,
Fame is the fair reward of human toil,
And I would wish to merit it from you:
I have done little yet, perhaps hereafter
I may do more to serve my country: Rome
Was full of open and of secret foes;
Patricians, and plebeians, citizens
And soldiers, all in wild confusion, seemed
To thirst for blood: I saw the gathering storm
That threatened universal ruin; saw
The bold conspirators tumultuous rise,
And bear down all before them: at their head
Were Sura and Cethegus; them I seized,
And gave to justice; but the Hydra faction
Hath many heads which still successive rise,
And mock my labors: Catiline boldly pushed
To the Quirinal gate; by gallant deeds,
Almost incredible, he kept the field,
And forced a passage to his army; Rome
Beheld him with amazement; Antony

In vain opposing Sulla's hardy veterans,
Was baffled and subdued; Petreius strove
To succor him, but with unequal force
And fruitless valor: thus on every side,
Surrounded by calamities, great Rome,
The mistress of the world, is on the brink
Of ruin; Cicero trembles for her fate.

CRASSUS.

What part hath Cæsar taken?

CICERO.

He hath behaved
As Cæsar must, with most undaunted courage,
Yet not as Rome could wish a zealous friend
Would act in her defence. I saw him quell
The rebel foe; yet after that, stir up
Seditious spirits, and by every art
Of smooth insinuation, work himself
Into the people's hearts. Amidst this scene
Of blood, methought a secret joy o'erspread
His glowing cheek, whilst his all-soothing voice
Courted applause, inviting Rome to be
His slave hereafter.

CATO.

I was ever fearful
Of Cæsar's power; he is not to be trusted.

SCENE III.

THE SENATE, CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

Well: am I still suspected in the senate?

Is Cato's stubborn virtue still my foe?
Of what does he accuse me?

CATO.

As a friend
To Catiline, the sworn enemy of Rome;
You have protected him, and leagued with those
It had become you better to chastise.

CÆSAR.

I would not stain my laurels with the blood
Of such vile miscreants: Cæsar fights with none
But warriors.

CATO.

What are these conspirators?

CÆSAR.

A dastard crowd, contemptible and vile:
They fled like slaves before me; but the soldiers
Of Sulla are a formidable band,
And boast an able chief; from them indeed
Rome hath some cause to fear; Petreius sinks
Beneath his wounds, and Catiline marches onward;
Our soldiers are alarmed: what says our consul?
And what has he resolved?

CICERO.

I'll tell thee, Cæsar:
Grant, heaven, we may succeed!—thou hast deserved
Suspicion, but I'll give thee the fair means
To clear thy honor, and avenge thy country.
I know thee well, thy virtues and thy frailty;
Know what thou canst, and what thou darest not do;
Know Cæsar would command, but not betray,
A noble friend, and a most dangerous foe:

Whilst I condemn I cannot but esteem thee.
Away: remember that the eyes of Rome,
And of the world, are on thee: go, support
Petreius, save the empire, and deserve
The love of Cato: we have men, but want
A general to conduct them; Cæsar best
Can lead them, and to him alone we trust
The safety and the glory of mankind.

CÆSAR.

Cicero on Cæsar safely may depend;
Farewell: I go to conquer or to die.

[*Exit.*

CATO.

You've touched him in the tenderest part; ambition
Will urge him on.

CICERO.

Great souls must ever thus
Be treated: I have bound him to the state
By this firm confidence; I know his valor
Will now support us: the ambitious still
Should be distinguished from the traitor; I
Shall make him virtuous if he is not so
Already. Courage, as directed, forms
The mighty hero, or the mighty villain;
And he who is renowned for guilt alone,
Had glory fired his breast, to him had been
The incense poured, to him the temple raised
For his exalted merit: Catiline's self,
By me conducted, had like Scipio shone:
Though many a Sulla is in Cæsar hid,
Yet doubt I not but Rome shall find in him
Her best support.

[*Turning to the chief of the Lictors, who enters armed.*

Well: these conspirators,
What have they done?

CHIEF LICTOR.

My lord, they met the fate
They merited, but other foes rise up,
Sprung from their blood; like Ætna's flames, that burst
From the parched entrails of the burning mount:
Another Hannibal, but far more dreadful,
Because amongst the guilty sons of Rome
He finds his traitorous friends, is at our gates.
A hundred voices roar for Catiline,
Condemn your laws, and curse your tardy senate;
Demand their ancient rights, and cry aloud
For vengeance on the consul.

CLODIUS.

Well indeed
They may, while Cicero tramples on the laws,
And spurns his equals thus; perhaps the senate——

CICERO.

Clodius, no more; restrain thy envious tongue,
Nor rashly blame the guiltless; my short power
Will soon be wrested from me; whilst it lasts
It shall not be controlled; you will have time
Enough to vex and persecute hereafter;
But whilst the state's in danger, Cicero claims
The tribute of respect: I know too well
This fickle world to hope for constancy
And candor from it; foul ingratitude
Is all that I expect; on false surmises
Great Scipio was accused; he thanked the gods,
And quitted Rome: I too will pay my vows
To gracious heaven, but will not leave you; no;

My days are all devoted to my country,
And all shall be expended in her service.

CATO.

Suppose I were to show myself in Rome,
Perhaps my presence might disperse the crowd,
And be a check on Cæsar, whom I own
I much suspect: if fortune frowns upon us——

CICERO.

We cannot do without you in the senate;
I've given my orders; Cæsar's in the field;
Thy great example may be useful here,
And Rome's expiring glory be restored
By Cato's virtue—but behold he comes,
And crowned with victory.

[*Cæsar enters; Cicero embraces him.*

Most noble Cæsar,
Hast thou preserved the state?—

CÆSAR.

I hope so: now
The consul will believe me—brave Petreius
Has gained immortal glory: here we fought,
Beneath this sacred rampart, in the sight
Of our domestic gods that fired each soul
With nobler rage: Metellus, and Murena,
With the brave Scipios showed in Rome's defence
The same exalted courage that subdued
Asia and Carthage; they have merited
Most nobly of their country: touching Cæsar
Let others speak: the desperate remains
Of Sulla's army seemed to brave their fate,
And in the agonies of death breathed forth
Their curses on us: midst the general slaughter,
The fiery Catiline long undaunted stood,

Fought through a host of circling foes, till spent
With ceaseless toil, and covered o'er with wounds,
Bravely he fell: I must admire the soldier,
Though I detest the rebel: once I loved him,
I own it; but let Cicero judge, if ever
To friendship Cæsar sacrificed his honor.

CICERO.

Cæsar is all that Cicero could desire,
All that he wished, and all he hoped to find him:
Go on, brave youth, preserve thy noble spirit,
And be thy country's friend; may heaven protect
And guard thee: never may thy generous soul
Be stained with vice, nor false ambition urge
Thy spotless youth to quit the paths of virtue!

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

PANDORA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PROMETHEUS, a Son of Heaven and Earth, a Demi-God.

PANDORA.

JUPITER.

MERCURY.

NEMESIS.

NYMPHS.

TITANS.

CELESTIAL DEITIES.

INFERNAL DEITIES.

PANDORA.

ACT I.

The scene represents a fine country, with mountains at a distance.

SCENE I.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS OF NYMPHS, PANDORA.

[*At the farther end of the stage, lying down in an alcove.*

PROMETHEUS.

In vain, Pandora, do I call on thee,
My lovely work; alas! thou hearest me not,
All stranger as thou art to thy own charms,
And to Prometheus' love: the heart I formed
Is still insensible; thy eyes are void
Of motion; still the ruthless power of Jove
Denies thee life, and drives me to despair:
Whilst nature breathes around thee, and the birds
In tender notes express their passion, thou
Art still inanimate; death holds thee still
Beneath his cruel empire.

SCENE II.

PROMETHEUS, THE TITANS, ENCELADUS, TYPHON, ETC.

ENCELADUS AND TYPHON.

Child of Earth
And Heaven, thy cries have raised the forest; speak;
Who amongst the gods hath wronged Prometheus?

PROMETHEUS.

[*Pointing to Pandora.*

Jove
Is jealous of my work divine; he fears
That altars will be raised to my Pandora;
He cannot bear to see the earth adorned
With such a peerless object; he denies
To grant her life, and makes my woes eternal.

TYPHON.

That proud usurper Jove did ne'er create
Our nobler souls; life, and its sacred flame,
Come not from him.

ENCELADUS.

[*Pointing to his brother Typhon.*

We are the sons of Night
And Tartarus:
To thee, eternal night, we pray,
Thou wert long before the day;
Let then to Janarus Olympus yield.

TYPHON.

Let the unrelenting Jove
Join the jealous gods above;
Life and all its blessings flow
From hell, and from the gods below.

PROMETHEUS AND THE TWO TITANS.

Come from the centre, gods of night profound,
And animate her beauty; let your power
Assist our bold emprize!

PROMETHEUS.

Your voice is heard,
The day looks pale, and the astonished earth

Shakes from its deep foundations: Erebus
Appears before us.

[*The scene changing represents chaos; all the gods of hell come upon the stage.*]

CHORUS OF INFERNAL DEITIES.

Light is hateful to our eyes,
Jove and heaven we despise;
The guilty race, as yet unborn, must go
With us to hell's profoundest depths below.

NEMESIS.

The waves of Lethe, and the flames of hell,
Shall ravage all: speak, whom must Janarus
In its dark womb embrace?

PROMETHEUS.

I love the earth,
And would not hurt it: to that beauteous object
[*Pointing to Pandora*
Have I given birth; but Jove denies it power
To breathe, to think, to love, and to be happy.

THE THREE PARCÆ.

All our glory, and our joy,
Is to hurt, and to destroy;
Heaven alone can give it breath,
We can nought bestow but death.

PROMETHEUS.

Away then, ye destroyers, ye are not
The deities Prometheus shall adore;
Hence to your gloomy seats, ye hateful powers,
And leave the world in peace.

NEMESIS.

Tremble thou, for thou shalt prove
Soon the fatal power of love:
We will unchain the fiends of war,
And death's destructive gates unbar.

[*The infernal deities disappear, and the country resumes its verdure: the nymphs of the woods range themselves on each side of the stage.*]

PROMETHEUS.

[*To the Titans.*

Why would ye call forth from their dark abyss
The foes of nature, to obscure the light
Of these fair regions?
From hell Pandora never shall receive
That flame divine which only heaven should give.

ENCELADUS.

Since, good Prometheus, 'tis thy dear delight
To scatter blessings o'er this new abode,
Thou best deservest to be its master: haste
To yon blest regions, and snatch thence the flame
Celestial, form a soul, and be thyself
The great Creator.

PROMETHEUS.

Love's in heaven; he reigns
O'er all the gods: I'll throw his darts around,
And light up his fierce fires: he is my god,
And will assist Prometheus.

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Fly to the immortal realms above,
And penetrate the throne of Jove;

The world to thee shall altars raise,
And millions celebrate thy praise.

End of the First Act.

ACT II.

The scene represents the same country; Pandora inanimate reclining in the alcove; a flaming chariot descends from heaven.

PROMETHEUS, PANDORA, NYMPHS, TITANS, ETC.

A DRYAD.

Ye woodland nymphs, rise from your fair abode,
And sing the praises of the demi-god;
Who returns from above
In the chariot of love?

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Ye verdant lawns, and opening flowers,
Ye springs which lavish nature's powers;
Ye hills that bear the impending sky,
Put on your fairest forms to meet his eye.

PROMETHEUS.

[*Descending from the chariot, with a torch in his hand.*

Ravished from heaven I bring to happier earth
Love's sacred flame, more brilliant than the light
Of glittering day, and to Jove's boasted thunder
Superior.

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Go, thou enlivening, animating soul,
Through nature's every work, pervade the whole;
To earth, to water, and to air impart,

Thy vivid power, and breathe o'er every heart.

PROMETHEUS.

[*Coming near to Pandora.*

And may this precious flame inspire thy frame
With life and motion! earth, assist my purpose!
Rise, beauteous object, love commands thee; haste,
Obey his voice; arise, and bless Prometheus!

[*Pandora rises, and comes forward.*

CHORUS.

She breathes, she lives; O love, how great thy power!

PANDORA.

Whence, and what am I? to what gracious powers
Owe I my life and being?

[*A symphony is heard at a distance.*

Hark! my ears
Are ravished with enchanting sounds; my eyes
With beauteous objects filled on every side:
What wonders hath my kind creator spread
Around me! O where is he? I have thought
And reason to enlighten me: O earth,
Thou art not my mother; some benignant god
Produced me: yes, I feel him in my heart.

[*She sits down by the side of a fountain.*

What do I see! myself, in this fair fountain,
That doth reflect the face of heaven? the more
I see this image, sure the more I ought
To thank the gods who made me.

NYMPHS AND TITANS.

[*Dancing round her.*

Fair Pandora,
Daughter of heaven, let thy charms inspire
An equal flame, and fan the mutual fire.

PANDORA.

What lovely object that way draws my eyes?
[*To Prometheus.*
Of all I see in these delightful mansions,
Nought pleases like thyself; 'twas thou alone
Who gavest me life, and I will live for thee.

PROMETHEUS.

Before those lovely eyes could see
Their author, they enchanted me;
Before that tongue could speak, Prometheus loved thee.

PANDORA.

Thou lovest me then, dear author of my life,
And my heart owns its master; for to thee
It flies with transport: have I said too much,
Or not enough?

PROMETHEUS.

O thou canst never say
Too much; thou speakest the language of pure love
And nature: thus may lovers always speak!

DUET.

God of my heart, eternal power,
Great love, enliven every hour;
Thy reign begins, and may thy transports prove
The reign of pleasure is the reign of love!

PROMETHEUS.

But hark! the thunder rolls; thick clouds of darkness,
As envious of the earth's new happiness,
Disturb our joys: what horrors throng around me!
Hark! the earth shakes, and angry lightnings pierce

The vault of heaven: what power thus moves the world
From its foundations?
[*A car descends, on which are seated Mercury, Discord, Nemesis, etc.*]

MERCURY.

Some rash hand hath stolen
The sacred fire from heaven: to expiate
The dire offence, Pandora, thou must go
Before the high tribunal of the gods.

PROMETHEUS.

O cruel tyrant!

PANDORA.

Dread commands!

MERCURY.

Obey:
Thou must to heaven.

PANDORA.

I was in heaven already,
When I beheld the object of my love.

PROMETHEUS.

Have pity, cruel gods!

PROMETHEUS AND PANDORA.

Barbarians, stay.

MERCURY.

Haste, offenders, haste away,
Jove commands, you must obey:
Bear her, ye winds, to heaven's eternal mansions.
[*The car mounts and disappears.*

PROMETHEUS.

The cruel tyrants, jealous of my bliss,

Have torn her from me; she was the lovely work
Of my own hands: I have done more than Jove
Could ever do: Pandora's charming eyes,
Soon as they opened, told me that she loved:
Thou jealous god! but thou shalt feel my wrath,
And I will brave thy power: for know, usurper,
Less dreadful far will all thy thunders prove,
Than bold Prometheus fired by hopeless love.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III.

The scene represents the palace of Jupiter.

JUPITER, MERCURY.

JUPITER.

O Mercury, I've seen this lovely object,
Earth's fair production; heaven is in her eye,
The graces dwell around her, and my heart
Is sacrificed a victim to her charms.

MERCURY.

And she shall answer to thy love.

JUPITER.

O no:
Terror is mine, and power; I reign supreme
O'er earth, and hell, and heaven; but love alone
Can govern hearts: malicious, cruel fate,
When it divided this fair universe,
Bestowed the better part on mighty love.

MERCURY.

What fearest thou? fair Pandora scarce hath seen
The light of day; and thinkest thou that she loves?

JUPITER.

Love is a passion learned with ease; and what
Cannot Pandora do? she is a woman,
And handsome: but I will retire a moment,
Enchant her eyes, and captivate her heart:
Ye heavens! in vain, alas! ye shine, for nought
Have you so fair, so beauteous as Pandora.

[*He retires.*

PANDORA.

Scarce have these eyes beheld the light of day,
Scarce have they looked on him I loved, when lo!
'Tis all snatched from me; death, they say, will come
And take me soon: O I have felt him sure
Already: is not death the sudden loss
Of those we love? O give me back, ye gods,
To earth, to that delightful grove where first
I saw my kind creator, when at once
I breathed and loved: O envied happiness!

[*The gods, with their several attributes, come upon the stage.*]

CHORUS OF GODS.

Let heaven rejoice
At the glad voice
Of heaven's eternal king.

NEPTUNE.

Let the sea's bosom—

PLUTO.

And the depths of hell—

CHORUS OF GODS.

To distant worlds his endless praises tell.
Let heaven rejoice, etc.

PANDORA.

How all conspires to threaten and alarm me!
O how I hate and fear this dazzling splendor!
Another's merit how can I approve,
Or bear the praise of aught but him I love?

THE THREE GRACES.

Love's fair daughter, here remain,
Thou in right of him shalt reign;
Heaven thy chosen seat shall be,
Earth in vain shall wish for thee.

PANDORA.

All affrights me,
Nought delights me,
Alas! a desert had more charms for me.
Hence, ye idle visions; cease,
Discordant sounds,
[*A Symphony is heard.*
And give me peace.
[*Jupiter comes forth out of a cloud.*

JUPITER.

Thou art the best and fairest charm of nature,
Well worthy of eternity: from earth
Sprang thy weak body; but thy purer soul
Partakes of heaven's unalterable fire,
And thou wert born for gods alone: with Jove
Taste then the sweets of immortality.

PANDORA.

I scorn thy gift, and rather would be nothing,
From whence I sprang; thy immortality,
Without the lovely object I adore,
Is but eternal punishment.

JUPITER.

Fair creature,
Thou knowest not I am master of the thunder:
Canst thou in heaven look back to earth?

PANDORA.

That earth
Is my abode; there first I learned to love.

JUPITER.

'Twas but the shadow of it, in a world
Unworthy of that noble flame, which here
Alone can burn unquenchable.

PANDORA.

Great Jove,
Content with glory and with splendor, leave
To earthly lovers happiness and joy:
Thou art a god; O hear my humble prayer!
A gracious god should make his creatures happy.

JUPITER.

Thou shalt be happy, and in thee I hope
For bliss supreme: ye powerful pleasures, you
Who dwell around me, now exert your charms,
Deceive her lovely eyes, and win her heart.

[*The Pleasures dance around her and sing.*

CHORUS OF PLEASURES.

Thou with us shalt reign and love,
Thou alone art worthy Jove.

A SINGLE VOICE.

Nought has earth but shadows vain,
Of pleasures followed close by pain;
Soon her winged transports fly,
Soon her roses fade and die.

CHORUS.

Thou with us shalt reign and love,
Thou alone art worthy Jove.

SINGLE VOICE.

Here the brisk and sportive hours
Shall cull thee ever-blooming flowers;
Time has no wings, he cannot fly,
And love is joined to immortality.

CHORUS.

Thou with us shalt reign and love,
Thou alone art worthy Jove.

PANDORA.

Ye tender pleasures, ye increase my flame,
And ye increase my pain: if happiness
Is yours to give, O bear it to my love.

JUPITER.

Is this the sad effect of all my care,
To make a rival happy?

[*Enter Mercury.*

MERCURY.

Assume thy lightnings, Jove, and blast thy foe;
Prometheus is in arms, the Titans rage,
And threaten heaven; mountain on mountain piled,
They scale the skies; already they approach.

JUPITER.

Jove has the power to punish; let them come.

PANDORA.

And wilt thou punish? thou, who art the cause
Of all his miseries; thou art a jealous tyrant:
Go on, and love me; I shall hate thee more;
Be that thy punishment.

JUPITER.

I must away:
Rive them, ye thunder-bolts.

PANDORA.

Have mercy, Jove!

JUPITER.

[*To Mercury.*

Conduct Pandora to a place of safety:
The happy world was wrapped in peace profound,
A beauty comes, and nought is seen but ruin.

[*He goes out.*

PANDORA.

[*Alone.*

O fatal charms! would I had ne'er been born!
Beauty and love, and every gift divine,
But make me wretched: if, all-powerful Love,
Thou didst create me, now relieve my sorrows;
Dry up my tears, bid war and slaughter cease,
And give to heaven and earth eternal peace.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV.

The scene represents the Titans armed, mountains at a distance, with giants throwing them on each other.

ENCELADUS.

Fear not, Prometheus, nature feels thy wrongs,
And joins with us in just revenge: behold
These pointed rocks, and shaggy mountains; soon
The jealous tyrants all shall sink beneath them.

PROMETHEUS.

Now, earth, defend thyself, and combat heaven:
Trumpets and drums, now shall ye first be heard:

March, Titans, follow me: the seat of gods
Is your reward; be fair Pandora mine.
[*They march to the sound of trumpets.*

CHORUS OF TITANS.

Arm, ye valiant Titans, arm,
Spread around the dread alarm:
Let proud immortals tremble on their thrones.

PROMETHEUS.

Their thunder answers to our trumpets' voice.
[*Thunder is heard; a car descends, bearing the gods towards the mountains: Pandora is seated near Jupiter; Prometheus speaks.*]
Jove gives the dreadful signal; haste, begin
The battle. [*The giants rise towards heaven.*

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Earth, and hell, and heaven confounded,
All with terrors are surrounded;
Cease, ye gods, and Titans, cease
Your cruel wars, and give us peace.

TITANS.

Yield, cruel tyrants.

GODS.

Rebels, fly.

TITANS.

Yield, heaven, to earth.

GODS.

Die, rebels, die.

PANDORA.

O heaven! O earth! ye Titans, and ye gods,
O cease your rage, all perish for Pandora:
I have made the world unhappy.

TITANS.

Draw
Your arrows now.

GODS.

Strike, thunders.

TITANS.

Hurl down heaven.

GODS.

Destroy the earth.

BOTH.

Yield, cruel tyrants—rebels fly—
Yield, earth, to heaven—die, rebels, die.

[*A dead silence for a time; a bright cloud descends; Destiny appears, seated in the middle of it.*]

DESTINY.

Cease, hostile powers, attend to me,
And hear the will of Destiny.

[*Silence ensues.*

PROMETHEUS.

Unalterable being, power supreme,
Speak thy irrevocable doom; attend,
Ye tyrants, and obey.

CHORUS.

Speak, the gods must yield to thee;
Speak, immortal Destiny.

DESTINY.

[*In the middle of the gods, who throng round him.*
Hear me, ye gods; another world this day
Brings forth: meantime let every gift adorn

Pandora; and you, Titans, who 'gainst heaven
Have raised rebellious war, receive your doom,
Beneath these mountains sunk forever groan.

[*The rocks fall upon them; the chariot of the gods descends to earth; Pandora is restored to Prometheus.*

JUPITER.

O fate, my empire yields to thee,
Jove submits to destiny:
Thou art obeyed; but from this hour let earth
And heaven be disunited: Nemesis,
Come forth.

[*Nemesis advances from the bottom of the stage, and Jupiter proceeds.*

Nemesis, thy aid impart,
Pierce the cruel beauty's heart;
My vengeance let Pandora know,
In the gifts that I bestow:
Let heaven and earth henceforth be disunited.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V.

The scene represents a grove, with the ruins of rocks scattered about it.

PROMETHEUS, PANDORA.

PANDORA.

[*Holding a box in her hand.*

And wilt thou leave me then? art thou subdued,
Or art thou conqueror?

PROMETHEUS.

Victory is mine:
If yet thou lovest me, love and destiny
Speak for Prometheus.

PANDORA.

Wilt thou leave me then?

PROMETHEUS.

The Titans are subdued: lament their fate:
I must assist them; let us teach mankind
To succor the unhappy.

PANDORA.

Stay a moment:
Behold thy victory: let us open this,
It was the gift of Jove.

PROMETHEUS.

What wouldst thou do?
A rival's gift is dangerous; 'tis some snare
The gods have laid.

PANDORA.

Thou canst not think it.

PROMETHEUS.

Hear
What I request of thee, and stay at least
Till I return.

PANDORA.

Thou biddest, and I obey:
I swear by love still to believe Prometheus.

PROMETHEUS.

Wilt thou then promise?

PANDORA.

By thyself I swear:
All are obedient where they love.

PROMETHEUS.

Enough:
I'm satisfied: and now, ye woodland nymphs,
Begin your songs; sing earth restored to bliss;
Let all be gay, for all was made for her.

FIRST NYMPH.

Come, fair Pandora, come and prove
An age of gold, of innocence, and love;
And, like thy parent Nature, be immortal.

SECOND NYMPH.

No longer now shall earth affrighted mourn,
By cruel war her tender bosom torn:
Pleasures now on pleasures flow,
Happiness succeeds to woe:
The flowers their fragrant odors yield;
Who would wither the fair field?
The blest creation teems with mirth and joy,
And nature's work what tyrant would destroy?

THE CHORUS.

[*Repeats.*

Come, fair Pandora, come and prove
An age of gold, etc.

FIRST NYMPH.

See! to Pandora Mercury appears,
And ratifies great Nature's kind decree.
[*The nymphs retire: Pandora advances with Nemesis, under the figure of Mercury.*]

NEMESIS.

Already I have told thee, base Prometheus
Is jealous of thee, and exerts his power
Like a harsh tyrant.

PANDORA.

O he is my lord,
My king, my god, my lover, and my husband.

NEMESIS.

Why then forbid thee to behold the gift
Of generous heaven?

PANDORA.

His fearful love's alarmed,
And I would wish to have no will but his.

NEMESIS.

He asks too much, Pandora, nor hath done
What thou deservest: he might have given thee beauties
Which now thou hast not.

PANDORA.

He hath formed my heart
Tender and kind; he charms and he adores me;
What could he more?

NEMESIS.

Thy charms will perish.

PANDORA.

Ha!
Thou makest me tremble.

NEMESIS.

This mysterious box
Will make thy charms immortal; thou wilt be

"HA! WHAT THICK CLOUD THUS O'ER MY SENSES SPREADS ITS FATAL DARKNESS?"

PANDORA

Forever beauteous, and forever happy:
Thy husband shall be subject to thy power,
And thou shalt reign unrivalled in his love.

PANDORA.

He is my only lord, and I would wish
To be immortal, but for my Prometheus.

NEMESIS.

Fain would I open thy fair eyes, and bless thee
With every good; would make thee please forever.

PANDORA.

But dost thou not abuse my innocence?
And canst thou be so cruel?

NEMESIS.

Who would hurt
Such beauty?

PANDORA.

I should die with grief, if e'er
I disobliged the sovereign of my heart.

NEMESIS.

O in the name of Nature, in the name
Of thy dear husband, listen to my voice!

PANDORA.

That name has conquered, and I will believe thee.
[*She opens the box; darkness is spread over the stage, and a voice heard from below.*]
Ha! what thick cloud thus o'er my senses spreads
Its fatal darkness? thou deceitful god!
O I am guilty, and I suffer for it.

NEMESIS.

I must away: Jove is revenged, and now
I will return to hell.

[*Nemesis vanishes: Pandora faints away on the grass.*]

PROMETHEUS.

[*Advancing from the farther end of the stage.*

O fatal absence! dreadful change! what star
Of evil influence thus deforms the face
Of Nature? where's my dear Pandora? why
Answers she not to my complaining voice?
O my Pandora! but behold, from hell
Let loose, the monsters rise, and rush upon us.

[*Furies and demons running on the stage.*

FURIES.

The time is come when we shall reign:
Fear and grief, remorse and pain,
From this great decisive hour,
O'er the world shall spread their power;
Death shall come, a bitter draught,
By the Furies hither brought.

PROMETHEUS.

That cruel guest shall powers infernal bring?
And must the earth lose her eternal spring?
To time, and dire disease, and horrid vice,
Shall mortals fall a helpless sacrifice?
The nymphs lament our fate: Pandora, hear
And answer to my griefs! she comes, but seems
Insensible.

PANDORA.

I am not worthy of thee:
I have destroyed mankind, deceived my husband,

And am alone the guilty cause of all:
Strike: I deserve it.

PROMETHEUS.

Can I punish thee?

PANDORA.

Strike, and deprive me of that wretched life
Thou didst bestow.

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Tenderest lover, dry her tears,
She is full of lover's fears;
She is woman, therefore frail,
Let her beauty then prevail.

PROMETHEUS.

Hast thou then, spite of all thy solemn vows,
Opened the fatal box?

PANDORA.

Some cruel god
Betrayed me: fatal curiosity!
The work was thine: O every evil sprung
From that accursed gift: undone Pandora!

LOVE.

[*Descending from heaven.*

Love still remains, and every good is thine:
[*Scene changes, and represents the palace of love.*]
[*Love proceeds.*

For thee will I resist the power of fate;
I gave to mortals being, and they ne'er
Shall be unhappy whilst they worship me.

PANDORA.

Soul of my soul, thou comforter divine,
O punish Jove; inspire his vengeful heart
With double passion for the blessed Pandora.

PROMETHEUS and PANDORA.

Heaven shall pierce our hearts in vain
With every grief, and every pain;
With thee no pains torment, no pleasures cloy;
With thee to suffer is but to enjoy.

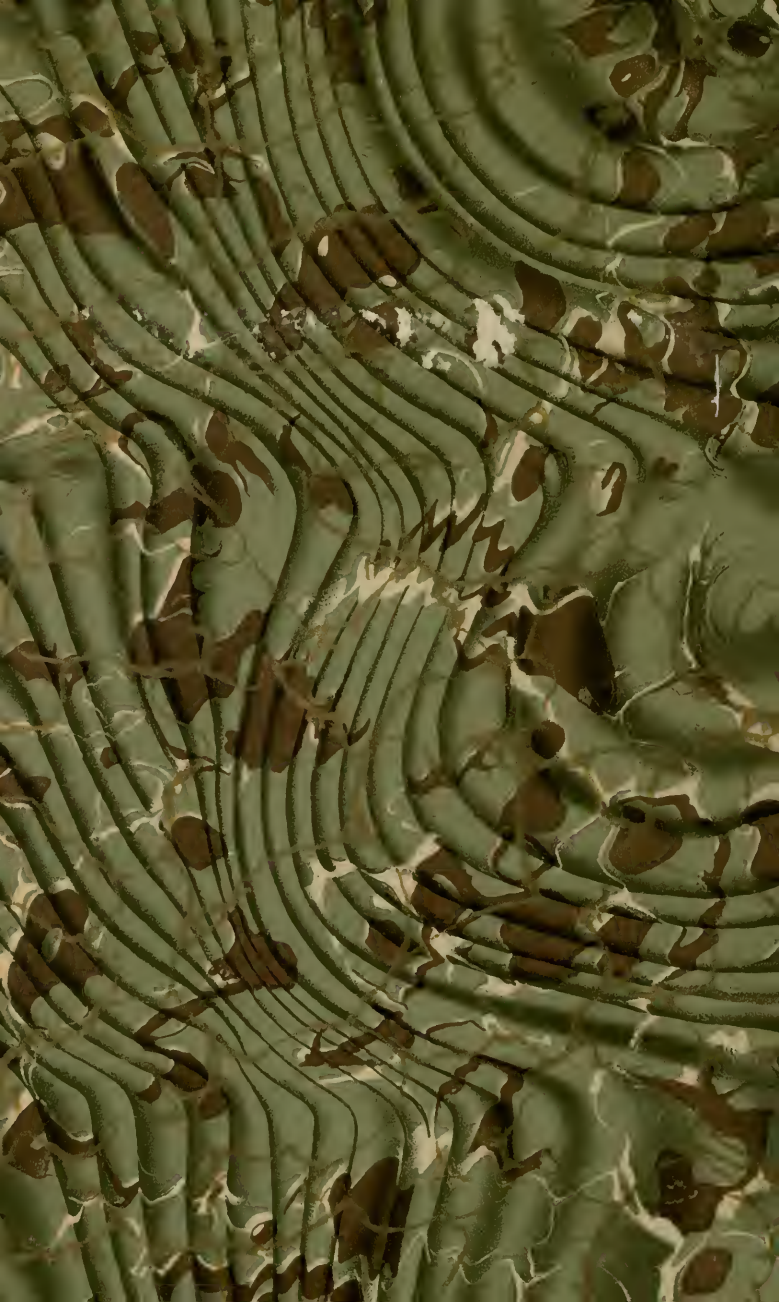
LOVE.

Lovely hope, on mortals wait;
Come, and gild their wretched state;
All thy flattering joys impart.
Haste, and live in every heart;
Howe'er deceitful thou mayest be,
Thou canst grant felicity,
And make them happy in futurity.

PANDORA.

Fate would make us wretched here,
But hope shall dry up every tear;
In sorrow he shall give us rest,
And make us even in anguish blest:
Love shall preserve us from the paths of vice,
And strew his flowers around the precipice.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.



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